THE LAST MILE-STONE



EMMA R. SAYLOR

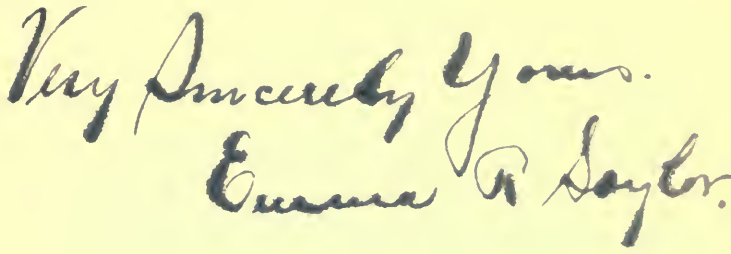


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Very Sincerely Yours.
Emma R Saylor.

THE LAST MILE-STONE



"ONLY YESTERDAY MRS. MCGINNIS AND OLD TOM GRANT GOT INTO A DISPUTE ANENT THE OWNERSHIP OF A CUTTING OF CHOICE MARTHA WASHINGTON GERANIUM . . . WELL, THE OLD LADY ISN'T BIGGER THAN A FIVE-CENT PIECE, BUT ALL THERE WAS OF HER WAS UP IN ARMS AND WHAT SHE DIDN'T SAY TO TOM GRANT ISN'T WORTH RECORDING."

SEE PAGE 43

THE LAST MILE-STONE

BY

EMMA R. SAYLOR



M CM XVII
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THE FRONTISPIECE IS FROM A PAINTING
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DEDICATED TO MY
ASSOCIATES AND CO-WORKERS, WHOSE
FAITH IN THE WORK AND IN ME
MADE SUCCESS POSSIBLE

2029820

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INTRODUCTORY

*MRS. KELLAM, the philosopher of the "Home of Peace," once said to me: "'Tis the last mile-stone of life we want to be after getting a good footing on, for we can't go on and there's no turning back, and the best of us are not ready to tumble off." So there was my title—*THE LAST MILE-STONE. *Then the subject matter is, "the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth." As for the story of Edith and Jerry, I am now no longer under oath and will not commit myself, but the story might have happened as I tell it. I leave it to the reader to judge.*

E. R. S.

THE LAST MILE-STONE

THE LAST MILE-STONE

LETTER I

DEAR JERRY:

I DON'T know just where to begin an accounting of the days spent in this little city of Southern California since I saw you last. In the first place, dear, it is heavenly to be friends again, and I could write reams telling you how I missed you every hour, how utterly shipwrecked and alone I felt the first months of my stay here, and how often I felt tempted to go back, if not to the old order of things, at least back to the old places, back to where I knew I could see you, to our old quarrels, to the inevitable making up process and to the comfort of knowing I had only to telephone to bring you to me.

What a darling you have always been, Jerry dear. Ever since my pinafore days it was you who eased my way; even when you scolded you never succeeded in hiding the tenderness behind your words, and how shamefully I took advantage and hurt you unthinkingly. Did I ever come up to your expectations in anything? I think not;

at every mile-stone of my life you tried to lead me in the path which promised the greatest chance for happiness, and I always chose the one that led opposite, and, as you know, came a cropper; but, Jerry, my friend, you never understood the cross wires in my nature and my fate was decreed the hour of my birth, and nothing you could do could prevent the floods of life rushing over me; that I weathered the storms and kept some of my illusions surprises myself, and when I look back through the long vista of years since my girlhood, I feel very grateful for not having fallen by the wayside.

To think it has been years since I saw you and smoky old St. Louis; and not a friendly line from you in all that time! I don't count, "herein find check, etc.," above your signature, J. A. Monro. I used to picture you when you wrote it, sitting at your desk in your stuffy office, regretfully recalling the last time I sat there opposite you. I can't recall anything except your white face after that long interview. I don't believe I quite believed you when you told me you would no longer advise me; that you no longer cared to be drawn into my private affairs; that our ways and thoughts were too far apart. It seemed impossible that I had lost your friendship, and, candidly, I was too sure that my judgment was right and you were wrong, to

realize all that your withdrawal meant to me; I was riding a high-horse of a fixed purpose and could see nothing else. I always longingly looked forward to your quarterly reports, even if the signature on the check of my remittance was the only thing that spanned our separation.

It was rather impertinent in Mrs. Drummond to take it upon herself to write you that I was working myself to death and frighten you into writing me, but I forgive her since it has made us friends again, and I will bridge these last years with a full report of my doings; and it will be like old times when I used to bring my little and big troubles to you, and never lacked for your sympathy or interest. Mrs. Drummond was right when she said I was working hard, but, Jerry, the Home of Peace for the Aged was the most providential thing that could have happened — I was desperately unhappy.

Gordon had again proven your theory of the utter fallacy of overcoming inherited dementia, by a violent attack that compelled his incarceration. I had made no intimacies in the new friends I had met, and was looking about for something to distract my mind and to ease the pain in my heart. I became interested in the efforts that a few well-meaning women were making to interest the

charitably inclined in establishing a Home for the Aged, and because my sympathy has always been with old people, and, vaguely, I had a theory regarding their care, I drifted into a movement in their behalf; and, Jerry, you can imagine the result. From being at first only faintly interested, the idea of establishing a Home for those in the mellow years of life shortly became an obsession. I thought of nothing else and the project soon became my own; the other women, after several weeks of enthusiastic assistance, deserted me for more exciting pastime, and I found myself pledged to carry the scheme to success or ignominious failure. The more thought I gave to the plan of establishing a Home for the Aged, the more I realized how inadequate other efforts in this direction had been, and how much more than merely supplying food and shelter there was to do.

There are hundreds of institutions all over the country whose object is to provide for old people. I've been in many, and always was impressed with the hopeless resignation of the inmates; no matter how beautiful the surroundings or magnificent the buildings, the atmosphere was not inviting, the aged there were objects of pity, and old age horrible to contemplate.

Well, Jerry dear, the motif of my scheme was

to have my Home different from all others I had seen or heard of; I purposed to rob old age of all its shadows, to prove that age was the crown of life, and gray hairs a diadem; to conserve all the wonderful wealth of wisdom that years of experience brought, and give it expression in an atmosphere of perfect contentment among contemporary spirits. I was determined that none of my old people would excite pity; on the contrary I was going to bring out the best there was in them, polish up their talents and accomplishments, encourage them to live out their remaining years, not rust out. I intended to develop their individualities, encourage their independence and excite their pride.

Oh! I can understand the misery of utter loneliness, the despair of realizing you belong nowhere, the hurt of mere tolerance. No young, ardent reformer felt the call of humanity stronger than I—the need of the Home for the Aged I planned to establish—and thus I found my life's work.

It is a long cry from Portland Square to active management of an old people's Home. I suppose it is hard to visualize the change, but, Jerry, dear, I work no harder now, and have more to show for the vitality spent, than an article in the society column. Now don't remind me that I enjoyed

the wild whirl of social life. I know I did—I loved the excitement of crowds, music, lights and flowers; they stimulated me like wine. I was often too excited to sleep and O, the waking dreams of those restless nights! How I longed for some great achievement, something to do that was worth while! I believe I have found my work and it shall be worth all I put into it. Now don't prophesy that this is only a philanthropic fad; that it will fizzle out when I wake up to the fact that there is very little difference in human nature, and that all the meanness and contrariness that flesh is heir to, is not overcome with decrepitude. I have had several shocks, but if anything, the shortcomings of my charges have only strengthened my belief in the old adage that it is never too late to learn. You would be surprised to know what adept pupils old people are when there is something to be gained in the learning. No, Jerry, this is not a fad; it is an inspiration, and the results will justify all I am sacrificing in personal comfort; besides, the work is bringing the better part of me to the surface. I realize more than ever the wasted years, so barren of happy results. I ruthlessly turned my back on all logical chances of happiness, and almost—not quite—lost your dear friendship. Why did you always believe in

me in spite of everything? Perhaps I'm just beginning to find myself in this chosen work, and your faith in me will be justified; at least, Jerry, I'm at peace, almost contented; if only Gordon were as he used to be—minus his wicked temper. Poor boy, what an ending to so promising a man! I ought never to have married him after your warning, but I thought I loved him; now I know it was pity and conceit. I believed I alone could save him from himself; poor boy, I would give my life to give him a clear brain. I won't write about him; Mrs. Drummond no doubt has given you all of the sordid details, and besides, I want to put all that behind me.

I have my work to do; are you interested? If what I have written of my old people's Home has not bored you to extinction and you want to hear more of it, I will send you a monthly budget. You might save the letters, and when we are both about seventy, we can turn to these pages and mark their percentage of merit according to the light of those added years of understanding.

Do write again,

EDITH.

LETTER II

DEAR JERRY:

YOUR long, delightful letter to hand. I have read it over and over again, just to feel the joy of your written words. I not only read what you had to say, but felt your nearness and heard your voice. I am more keenly realizing how lonely I have been these past years, what the break in our friendship meant, how hungry I was for sympathy, *your* kind of sympathy that always understands. Why, Jerry dear, I was all in a tremble of anticipation when I recognized your handwriting on the bulky envelope that required three stamps to reach me. I could hardly wait for the opportunity to read your letter in the quiet of my own room, and I've been up in the air ever since.

I might have known you would be interested in my Home of Peace and that you do not think it strange that I should have founded it, and it is like you to say I will make my dreams and hopes concerning it come true. Jerry, friend, it is all working out beautifully, and a wonderful thing has happened since I wrote you, which makes me confident that I'm going to succeed, and that my

Home for the Aged is going to be famous before many years have passed.

In order to have you appreciate the good news, of which I will tell you later, I will do as you ask, and begin from the time I began to evolve from a chaos of dreams the first substance of actuality, and you will see that some occult and benign influence is at work to assist me. After I had canvassed a number of prospective patrons whom I induced to subscribe toward a yearly maintenance fund, I felt sufficiently encouraged to begin active operations for establishing the Home. Naturally my first step was to secure a dwelling, and I looked the city over for suitable quarters, and after a week's search was pretty well discouraged at not finding just what was needed—a large, comfortable, sunny home with plenty of ground. I came home one evening after a day's search, all tired out, with little prospect of finding what I wanted, and after a lonely, late dinner, retired. My last waking thoughts were of that elusive domicile that I felt must be somewhere in this city if I only could find it. It must have been some time just before dawn when I was awakened by a consciousness that some one had said "look for the Whitney house." It awoke me fully and I racked my brain for some clue that could have given me that im-

pression, but I found none. The name meant nothing to me. I had been here only a little more than a year and was of course not familiar with every locality, and outside of the set I met through Mrs. Drummond knew very few people. After breakfast Elinor Bly came according to arrangement, and we started on another house hunt in her motor. Now Elinor is a native and I took it for granted she would know if there was such a place as the Whitney house, and was surprised to find how disappointed I was when she declared she had never heard of it. We drove over the eastern part of the city and visited every real estate agent en route, and I never failed to ask for that particular abode, but no one seemed to know any more about its existence than Elinor did, and she chaffed me considerably on what she called my nightmare.

We had exhausted every possible prospect in the east end and were about to return home disappointed when I espied a little real estate office wedged in between a barber shop and a grocery. I induced Elinor to make one more stop, and I put my inevitable query, "Have you any knowledge of a Whitney house?" to a little old man in charge, expecting him to reply as the others had, "Never heard of such a place"; but instead, he

filled us with amazement by not only replying in the affirmative, but by directing us to it. The moment I saw the house, I knew it was the house of my desire—a large, old-fashioned building standing on the corner of a quiet side-street, surrounded by palm trees, a beautifully kept lawn and a perfect wilderness of flowers in the rear.

I rang the bell, a young girl opened the door, and I inquired if this was the Whitney house — she explained that a Mr. Whitney had built it, but that her mother had bought it years ago. I asked her if it could be let, and told her for what purpose. She, smiling, shook her head and said it was neither for sale nor for rent, but somehow as I caught a glimpse of the large cool hall and winding easy stairway I knew I had to have the place and said so, and before she could close the interview by another refusal to consider the proposition, a voice from upstairs asked what we wanted. The girl explained, and the voice asked her to bring us up. We found the invitation came from the girl's mother who was confined to her room. I lost no time in following the daughter. Elinor went back to the motor and, Jerry, I'll make the story short; when I came out of that house I had a receipt in my pocket for six months' rent, and arrangements made to take possession

in ten days' time. The invalid, I believe, considered my unexpected offer as providential as I did her acceptance, for she was in a state of mind that welcomed a change, and in my eagerness to secure my dream-house, I offered her generous inducements that she saw fit to accept.

Elinor was very much impressed at the experience, and I must confess, Jerry, it was a bit uncanny, but I took it for a good omen and lost no time in preparing for the dedication. We all worked like beavers and decorated the house beautifully. The newspapers gave us an attractive write-up, published the photographs of the promotors and praised the plan. We secured one of the best speakers the city boasted and the great day arrived. The house was packed; Dr. Ghiro spoke feelingly of what we hoped to accomplish, and at just the right moment presented me with a flower-decorated key which signified that the door of the Home was unlocked and stood wide open for the dear old people who were to learn to love and bless it, if I had my way and the power to make it a place worthy of them. So my Home of Peace was launched, and my education commenced, for indeed I had much to learn, but my heart and mind were in the work and I had my vision before me to guide me. The very next day

we admitted our first member and my first thorn.

Remember, Jerry, I idealized age; I firmly believed that all the virtues possible to human nature crystalized with the weight of years; it was a distinct shock to realize that the strongest element in the character of our species is developed to the highest degree by habit, and that either the good or evil in our nature will predominate in old age, according to the way we have thought and lived.

Mrs. Jane Matson is as handsome an old lady as one could wish to see—aristocratic to her finger tips, a spoiled, dissatisfied woman, needing what the Home had to offer, and resenting the fact. She wore her handsome old-fashioned gowns trimmed in rare old lace, and her antique jewelry, with the air of a Duchess, and poor little Miss Grime, who is our matron, almost wore herself to skin and bones answering imperial summons, until she finally was persuaded she was not helping to establish the co-operative spirit, which was to be the foundation of the Home, by encouraging the utter selfishness Mrs. Matson was exhibiting to an alarming degree. Fortunately, a few days later, we added the dearest, sweetest old lady to our family, Mrs. C. C. Malley. She is as deaf as a post, but can follow every word spoken by watching the lips of the speaker, and her eyes

talk faster than her tongue. She has had three husbands; the two C's in her name stand for Casedy and Cutter, and she speaks of all three departed with equal feeling and always sheds a tear in their memory.

Then came Captain Lane and his little wife, and, Jerry, it is a joy to watch the old lovers; been married fifty years and I know they never left off spending their honeymoon. Then came old lady Seamon, who taught school in Mexico many years ago, and old Mrs. Riddle who was the only survivor of an Indian massacre in '49, and several others not particularly prominent, but just eligible as members in our Home, and all helping to make history for me in this big work. We have fourteen members (you note I do not say *inmates;* I think that word abominable, it suggests prisons or insane asylums) and enough applications to double that number, but we have exhausted our resources both financially and practically, and until we get more money cannot expand.

How I wish I were worth millions; how much real happiness I could buy; but what is the use of spending fruitless time in just wishing! I intend to get the millions and lay them at the feet of old age and say, "Here, old man, and you, dear old lady, is your reward of merit; for every hour of

hard work you have accomplished, for every kind act you shall receive a holiday, and the holiday will be bright and happy. Spend, as you used to wish you could spend them, without a care in the world, and a song in your heart." There is much more to tell before I reach the next stage of development, but I want to draw my narrative out a little longer, just for the pleasure of living over the incidents by reciting them to you. I want you to know my people as I know them and to love them as I do, and to participate from month to month in my hopes and plans. Therefore I shall not tell you in this letter what the wonderful thing is, promised for the Home, but leave you to guess, continuing in my next.

With oodles of love, your satisfied,

EDITH.

LETTER III

MINE FRIEND:

IT IS not time to send you the third budget, you will hardly have read my last, but I'm tired and yet not ready for sleep, and lonesome. True, I could surround myself with pleasant people; I've met any number since I founded the Home of Peace, but my days are so full and I see so many strangers during my working hours that I'm rather on edge when night falls, and not very good company to inflict on others—just the kind of mood I should be sure to deluge you with were you here instead of thousands of miles away.

How I would love to have you sitting opposite me. I have a large armchair that always reminds me of you; it is very much like the one that used to be in our old library. Since your first letter I have given it a place all its own opposite the fireplace, and call it your chair, and I picture you now sitting in it as I write and if there is anything in telepathy you must often know I'm talking silently to you.

Jerry, I love this California town; from my win-

dow I can look over the Bay and see the battleships at anchor, the sails of yachts, and the many launches that are mere specks on the dark blue surface. I have built my bungalow on an angle of two canyons, and although I'm only a short distance from the heart of the city, one has to skirt the edge of the town and detour quite a grade to reach me. The situation is quite isolated, yet from the near distance the faint noises of city life reach me. The honk of the automobile horn and clang of street car gongs are characteristically urban, yet quail, rabbits and occasional stray coyotes slip over the side of the canyon and make free in my garden. I am glad that two deep cuts in the topography of this section of the town will always insure my isolation and leave the wild things of nature undisturbed.

I love the climate, although it is not perpetual sunshine as is claimed in real estate folders; that would be as unbearable as the continual smile on a human face; but we do have such beautiful weather. Days and days bright, brisk and stimulating when it seems just fine to be alive, and all things possible! There is so much of California, a spacious variety, everything nature has to offer here is on such a generous scale, that it seems incredible that small vanities, petty meannesses, can

survive. Whenever I feel a mental cramping or spasm of ill nature, I motor out to the mountains by myself and benefit by their silent sermons. This has been the safety valve of my existence since I came here.

I could not talk of Gordon to any one; no one here knew him. It was at Los Angeles that the worst happened and I had to put him away and I came here to forget, if I could, the bitter humiliation of his trial and commitment. I don't know why I chose this place; its scenic beauty and quaintness had appealed to me years ago when I toured the coast, and I hoped to meet no one that knew me in St. Louis, but the day after my arrival I met Emily Reeves, and I realized the world was too small to hide in. You remember her, don't you, Jerry? She is the Lessings' eldest daughter. The Lessings are living here and Emily was down from Long Beach on a visit. Of course she had heard all about Gordon, but had the tact not to sympathize. She has lost her only daughter and is feeling pretty bitter at the trick Destiny has played her. It has made her a trifle hard, but I believe it is only an external hardness that hides the heartache. She was brusque in her greeting, but I felt her unspoken sympathy and appreciated her asking no questions. I have seen her a number

of times since, but only by chance, and not until a few weeks ago did I see either of the Lessings, and that meeting, too, was by the merest accident.

It was at the bank; just as I turned from the paying teller's window I collided with Henry Lessing. He recognized me immediately, although it has been years since last we met, and I know I am very much changed. I can't recall what either of us said the first moments after our meeting. I felt rather than heard the kindly interest in his words. We walked toward the writing room and sat down in the comfortable chairs provided there and talked of St. Louis and the old neighbors, who, in years gone by, had also been our friends. I knew he was making conversation in order to give me time to recover my self-possession, for I felt ashamed of the momentary weakness that betrayed my hurt, and the fear of being questioned about Gordon. He asked about the old people's Home. Said he had been following my work through the newspapers, and had wondered why I never asked him for a subscription. I told him what had been accomplished and what I hoped to do, and as I talked, I forgot all about the miserable trouble of my life and the dread of meeting old friends, and painted in word-pictures my Dream-Home for the aged.

Perhaps because I am so terribly in earnest I impressed him, for he followed me with real interest, asking pertinent questions as I expatiated on the subject, and watching me narrowly all the while. I did not question his interest, I simply knew somehow I had found a kindred spirit, and that for some inexplicable reason he had materialized as a factor in my work. We took no account of time as we talked, until I suddenly realized it was past banking hours and the shades of the bank had been drawn. We left the bank, still talking on the same subject. He told me then I had anticipated his own intentions; that he and Mrs. Lessing had talked of founding a Home for the Aged, and now that he was no longer active in his eastern companies, both his sons having developed into hard-headed business men, capable of going on where he left off, he had to find some local interest to keep him out of mischief, and something that could use some of his money as he wanted it used. He told me without boasting that he was rich—too rich—and his interests were making him richer while he slept; that his family would now need only to spend money; the making of it had become merely automatic. It all sounded like a fairy tale for it did not seem so long ago when he was making the sparks fly at his forge.

He certainly has hammered and fashioned his destiny with the sure stroke of genius that marked his workmanship in his shop.

He smiled down on me from his great height and declared I was the last person he would have associated with strenuous philanthropy or altruism, but that I had presented the proposition from an angle he never had thought of. I knew he was questioning my disposition to stick to the hard work it entailed, and I rather resented the inference. He could not disassociate me from the life I led in St. Louis, and he had a wholesome, candid contempt for the frivolous society woman, and although he did not say so, he was trying to reconcile my present activities with its serious responsibilities, with his conception of what he had always considered my limitations, or that of any other woman, brought up as I had been.

He has always accomplished so much, and is one of the few self-made men whose honesty or competency is never questioned. He has gone rough-shod over the stony places in his life, asking or giving no quarter. There were no half measures; he gave freely, unsparingly, the best there was in him to all he undertook, and he expected and exacted the best in others. His life has been with men, men of brawn and muscle. His was the

greater intelligence, a born boss, combining a rare executive ability with the mechanical genius of an artisan. It is no wonder that he became the peer of manufacturing barons, and then too rich to make mere work any longer an incentive.

Jerry, I wish men like Lessing wouldn't retire. It is a mistaken idea that work ages; it does not, but enforced idleness does. Oh, the pathos behind his remarks when he spoke of having shouldered his burdens on his sons, and qualifying by giving his reason for doing so, the invalidism of his wife! His love for his wife is the biggest thing in his life, and I'm sure it was the leverage that separated him from his factories and put him into the bondage of retirement. Knowing all this I thought better of my resentment and tried to justify myself in his better opinion. I told him of my youthful ambitions, of my constant desires for active work; I reminded him I was my father's daughter and had rightly inherited his great capacity for work, and then I told him of Gordon, and why I must be occupied or go mad. I explained I did not need money, I had enough for my needs or I might have found consolation in working for my living, but in the care of my old people, the planning of that wonderful Home of Peace, I was finding my solace and my happiness. Well, Jerry boy, it was

a momentous meeting. I've secured an ally and found an old friend.

This is what I meant when I told you in my last letter that something had come to the Home. Our compact was all very solemn. Mr. Lessing is to share my work, but I am bound by a promise to see the thing through. It is to be developed gradually, like the unfolding of a great canvas, and some day the beautiful picture will stand revealed in all its perfect harmony, a lesson in modern philanthropy, a thing of beauty and a joy forever! Amen.

The first step was to find a permanent location for the Home, and we searched over a radius of several miles and found just what we wanted; a fine old house in the midst of orange and lemon trees. There are ten acres of highly cultivated land, barns, chicken houses and a vegetable garden — just an ideal spot for my old dears; they will have a magnificent view of white-capped mountains and a glimpse of the sea. It is only seven miles from the centre of the city and the electric cars are only a block away, yet it is the country, with all that the country means, quiet, idyllic peacefulness. It is a big part of my dream come true, for Mr. Lessing has given his check for it and tomorrow we get the deed. I am too happy

to sleep, therefore I'm writing to you into the wee hours of the night, so that you can rejoice with me and wish me well.

Mr. Lessing is first a business man, then a philanthropist. We are to incorporate. There are to be five directors; a banker, a financier, a judge, Mr. Lessing and "yours truly." It all sounds very formidable and we have had some pretty warm arguments, Mr. Lessing and I, regarding the future management. He says I am too visionary and sentimental. I tell him no big work succeeded unless there were visions and sentiment. There must be a goal. I had hitched my wagon to a star. I would look up, not down, for guidance, and the Home must be the embodiment of sentiment. I claim my old people have hearts and memories, and both should be kept tender in the environment I mean to create for them.

He wanted to send for literature of other institutions to fashion our rules by. I would have none of them. I want no irksome restrictions nor do I want to fashion over old lives. My people will not need to ask permission to leave the premises or to receive visitors. They will be free to come and go and they can have their old cronies come to tea with them when they please. There will be an admission fee, of course, for I do not want the

stigma of charity to mar their happiness. I should like to encourage the paying of admission fees to homes for the aged before the Home is needed; it is better than life insurance or as good, for old age should be provided for. It comes on unnoticed and then it often is too late.

Mr. Lessing and I wax warm over our differences of opinion but in the end I win, although he says, "Well, try it your way first and we'll see," as if he were sure I'd see the wisdom of his conclusions before long. I enjoy his deep interest in the work. Yesterday we again inspected the premises he purchased. I pictured how the Home would appear before long; tiny cottages for two, surrounding the main building, a flower garden in front of each, a smoking pavilion for the men, an annex kitchen for the women, where their between-meal, tea or coffee, could be prepared by themselves, an assembly room for services, lectures, musicales and dances (for my old folks will want to dance by that time in the joy of living), and a real hospital fully equipped. Mr. Lessing gravely followed my fancy and my finger as I pointed out the location of all these future appurtenances, and then said, "You make me see it all, child, and I believe it is a prophecy; you believe in the possibility and that is half the battle." He

is a dear, Jerry. I don't think about the money; it is his interest, his belief in the proposition that helps. I feel now I have a strong ally and that nothing can keep us from creating the greatest Home of its kind in the world, and the happiest.

It is very late. I'm not tired, I could write volumes and not tell you all there is to tell, but I have a busy day before me, so I will spare you until the next regular chapter is due.

Au revoir,

EDITH.

LETTER IV

DEAR JERRY:

IT HAS been a very busy month. I've had no time to think of myself and I am too tired at night to write, although I've often longed to have you near to talk over the day's doings. We are temporarily settled in our new home. I say temporarily, for we are building an addition, and it necessitated a little cramping of space. Mr. Lessing and I soon discovered that the dining-room of the old house was far too small for our purposes and he fell readily into my suggestion of adding an extension to the rear. It is to contain a large mission dining-room for seventy-five to eighty diners, a pantry and a storeroom and a detached fireproof kitchen. It will also have a number of additional bedrooms.

He has also arranged for the installation of a steam plant with sufficient heating capacity for all our future cottages, annexes and the wonderful hospital we will be sure to acquire some day. It has been such fun to plan everything. Mr. Lessing is testing my practicability, I know, and I believe he is beginning to see that I can combine

common sense and a practical knowledge of management with sentiment. He enjoys coming out and talking with our members. I bought a cow last week and surprised him with a glass of buttermilk. He praised the milk but questioned my ability to run a dairy, but as usual our argument ended by his promise to duplicate my donation, so we will add another milcher to our establishment. We have a long-legged gardener who is to raise all the vegetables we eat, and we plan to have an orchard to supply our fruit. I'm afraid the lemon orchard, as a business proposition, is not going to pay; however, that is a question for experience to settle later. We moved from our old quarters in relays, settling part of our members comfortably before disturbing the others.

Elinor Bly and Mrs. Carter, who have been the loyal ones and stood by me from the beginning, offered their services to help move our family, and I did not hesitate to accept their offer. Mrs. Carter is a past mistress in handling domestic problems and it was at her suggestion that the feeble or more helpless members were transferred first, leaving the strong and more capable ones to look after and assist at the old place. The actual moving of furniture and effects was not as difficult as it might seem, for both the rented house and the

one we purchased were fully furnished as to essentials, but every member had some keepsake; a precious chair, couch, books, pictures, et cetera, that had to be handled with care, under the anxious supervision of the owner.

I want to tell you what happened the second day of the moving. Mrs. Riddle is a very large, corpulent woman who labors under a mountain of fat, on crutches. She is very tall, the mother of thirteen children, and boasts of having midwifed into the world the largest number of native sons and daughters of this city. She took her weekly bath religiously on every Tuesday at just 2 p.m. It happened that that was the hour when van number two arrived and the matron was busy directing the men where to place the things they brought. Mrs. Riddle called Mrs. Grime, as she passed her door, and reminded her the day and the hour of her bath had arrived. Mrs. Grime explained that the bath would have to be postponed until things were settled. Mrs. Riddle eyed her accusingly and pronounced judgment. "I believe in punctuality; I must have my bath now." Mrs. Grime again told her it was too inopportune to consider, and went her busy way.

An hour later Captain Lane came rushing out to find the matron, but when he saw me he ex-

citedly bade me go to the bath-room to Mrs. Riddle's rescue, as she was screaming for help. Frightened, I rushed pell-mell up the stairs, the matron and other members following closely; we found the door of the bath-room bolted, heard the staccato squeals of Mrs. Riddle to the accompaniment of running water. The excitement had brought some of the workmen of the new building to the scene, and at my order the lock was broken. I never will forget the picture that confronted me. Mrs. Riddle fairly filled the tub, the water was streaming and running over the sides; she was as red as a boiled lobster, and wedged in so tightly she could not move, and the hot water tap turned on and out of her reach. I shut off the water and hastily tested its temperature and was relieved to find, although uncomfortably warm, it was not scalding her. I asked what she meant by disobeying the matron. She answered as nonchalantly as if she were sitting normally in an easy chair, "I wanted my bath and I got it," and did not seem in the least embarrassed by the predicament her insistence had placed her in. The matron and I then attempted to get her on her feet and out of the tub, but it was a physical impossibility to budge her. We drained the tub and called in more help and tugged and pulled without avail.

Mrs. Riddle never turned a hair, taking our herculean efforts in her behalf as a matter of course, and part of the necessary detail of that particular, much-desired bath. Finally we put a sheet over her generous pinkness and called in a couple of the huskiest workmen on the building job; they did not succeed any better than we did, and I was afraid one or the other would come away with a detached arm. So I was perfectly willing to listen to the sheepish suggestion of one of the men to fetch a board and to pry her out. This was done and I'm afraid none of us thought of possible splinters when the heavy plank was brought. The men set to work in earnest now; there was no hesitancy in their methods; a heavy, almost inanimate body had to be moved, and the accomplishment of that object was part of their regular business. Mrs. Riddle left the job of getting out of the tub to them and watched the proceeding with less interest than we did. I certainly was relieved when she was finally transferred to a chair in the room. Once she got on her feet and on her crutches she was herself again, and she returned to her room in calm, majestic triumph. She had taken her bath, her system had not been encroached upon, and nothing I could say could make her understand the absurdity of the situation. The incident

has had this moral. A bath of easy access must be furnished for persistent, methodical fat bathers, and a nice smooth plank kept in readiness for future like emergencies.

Well, we succeeded in settling them all for the time being, and until the completion of the new wing we had to put two in one room. After much thought the matron and I allowed them to choose room mates, and so pleased every one; and I will say this much for them, they behaved beautifully and didn't grumble half as much as I expected at the general upheaval of their orderly lives. The men take a lively interest in watching the construction of the addition, and the women in examining the grounds and finding unlooked-for treasures. Mrs. Matley found the only almond tree on the place. Mrs. Stowe, who, by the way, does the most beautiful needle-work I ever saw, discovered a mother cat and kittens, while old lady Sharr found a hen sitting on a stolen nest under a rose bush. I go out to View Dale early in the morning, and have been spending the greater part of the day at the Home, looking after the details of the new building, and it is like coming home to me, for my adopted family are always watching for my coming and greet me as if they really cared.

Mr. Lessing rarely fails in his daily visit and now knows all our members by name. He is particularly interested in Captain Prime, who is our librarian and orator. His title of Captain is not pseudonymous, but his by right of service. He comes of old English stock, and was educated for the ministry and was always a great reader. How he took to seafaring for a living is one of those unaccountable freaks of Fate that is always upsetting the calculations of human beings. However, he must have excelled in his vocation for he was given great responsibilities by the government, and his log-book has been used for data in writing the history of California of the epoch-making era of '49. He has told us some intensely interesting incidents of those adventurous days, for he rounded the Horn time and time again when the gold rush brought settlers from all parts of the globe, and when might, and not right, ruled. He must have been a powerful man physically, in his prime, for although he is thin almost to emaciation, his shoulders drawn to a stoop, his great hands and large frame and fine head give evidence of past great strength and endurance. He is very feeble physically, but has a wonderfully well preserved mentality and a tenacious hold on life. His memory is remarkable; he recites pages of

prose and poetry in a voice whose strength is all out of proportion to his frail body. We always call upon him to do the honors of the Home on state occasions. He is so indubitably a gentleman, so gentle, considerate of others, that we all love and respect him. His keen intellect and whimsical sense of humor make him easily the most popular man of the Home. I like to listen to the Captain and Mr. Lessing talking; it takes one backward to strenuous achievement. Both have accomplished so much in their own way, although the lines of their lives have been so far apart, and the character of their work and natures were so different, yet here they sit side by side, meeting on the same plane—experience—finding a common interest in a golden past.

It is all so very beautiful, Jerry, seeing it as I do, and all very much worth while. Age has its compensation, but it must be earned. Our duty never ceases until we reach the grave, and neither does our schooling; we must learn the final lesson of life, the art of growing old beautifully and earn the reward—contentment.

I must make my monthly visit to Gordon tomorrow; how I dread it. It unsettles me for days afterward; sometimes I feel I cannot bear the thought of his incarceration any longer. He never

knows me, and prattles like a child. His great body loses nothing of its symmetry and his eyes have the innocent expression of a baby. The doctors tell me he has frequent violent outbreaks when forceful restraint is necessary, but I'm glad I've never seen him when he was that way. It would be too dreadful.

Poor father, his pride is the hardest thing about him; even the proof of Gordon's irresponsibility has not mitigated the fact of the disgrace of his actions, and he cannot understand why I will not divorce him. Well, we must all lead our several lives as Fate decrees and I must seek my own salvation in my work for the aged.

Lovingly yours,

EDITH.

LETTER V

JERRY, DEAR FRIEND:

YOU are very persistent in questioning me about myself apart from the work of the Home. The reason I have not told you more of my daily life besides what pertains to my interest there, is that there is not much to tell. My menage at present consists of one maid whose duties are manifold, and a Chinese cook who can and does give me excellent meals, and who unobtrusively keeps an eye on my physical welfare. He also gardens for me; he is a genius with flowers, and my garden is really beautiful. Yes, Jerry, my bungalow is large enough to hold a companion, several of them if I wished to have them, but surely at my time of life I don't need either a chaperon or paid companion. Some day when Dorothy is old enough to leave school, I shall send for her, and then I am always expecting brother Tom to tire of his eternal wanderings and be willing to come and live with me. In the meantime I prefer to live alone, and thoroughly enjoy my complete emancipation.

I am not easily accounted for in this little town;

my work brings me into the limelight, of course, and there is sensed that all has not been well with me, and naturally my motives in establishing the Home have been questioned and no doubt a great many believe I'm getting compensation for my work and cannot reconcile the position of Managing Director of a modest institution with my rather pretentious bungalow and my motor.

The Lessings are not in society here, so they cannot be my social sponsors if I wanted them to, which I don't. They live very quietly, and I believe very few realize he is the Henry Lessing whose advertisements glare at you from every magazine published. I have dined with them from time to time and enjoyed doing it. Mrs. Lessing is very miserable physically, but the essence of patience, and is really pleased at the interest Mr. Lessing takes in the old folk's Home.

She told me, with one of her illuminative smiles, that I had given him something to play with. The evening always ended with Mr. Lessing at the large pipe organ which he operates mechanically. It is installed in the living-room of the bungalow that he had built for his wife's use exclusively. It was placed close to the "big house," as they call the rambling home he bought when he came here years ago. The bungalow has the

advantage of having their sleeping and living quarters all on one floor, so that Mrs. Lessing can entertain her few chosen friends from her wheeled chair. Emily runs down often, but they are alone most of the time. The other daughters, Ruth and Mrs. Long, spend most of their time in their studios in New York.

I have not seen much of the family for many years. Emily Reeves and I were in the same set shortly after we both were married, but we drifted apart, I to go to Chicago with Gordon when he started on his third venture that ended as all his others had, in failure, and she to come West to try ranching. I don't know if Reeves is independently successful. I hope he is, for he really is capable, but he is not of the same strenuous type that characterizes the Lessings. He really has a rather hard time of it among them I think, for Lessing has but one standard by which he judges men, unqualified success, and measured by his own results, Reeves or any other man would suffer by comparison.

We have some rather amusing scenes which, while threatening our mutual interests in the Home, usually end in a better understanding. As Mrs. Lessing said one night when she followed our arguments that waxed warmer with every word,

"You are both set in your ideas; Edith *feels* she is right, Henry *believes* he is, and if a woman really has convictions and a man an open mind, the results are usually in favor of the woman." Whether she is right or not we usually compromise and are all the better friends, and the Home is being managed according to my original plans. I am perfectly willing to conduct the financial and business end of it on the strict lines Mr. Lessing suggests, but when it comes to adjusting the affairs of the household, I will not brook interference. I have a horror of institutionalizing the atmosphere of the Home and will not sanction rules that have this tendency. True, it is necessary to have system. Every private household should be systematically managed; no comfort could be obtained without a proper regard for punctuality and a time and place for all things, but I insist upon the right of our members to the privacy of their own rooms and these rooms must be made as truly homelike to them as their individual tastes and habits suggest. I solve all petty problems on the principle of the Golden Rule, and when I fall back on that I minimize my mistakes for I won't exact of others what I would strenuously object to myself if I were in their place.

Mr. Lessing and I argued the question of giving

our people certain daily tasks, his contention being that they would be more satisfied by being occupied; I agreed to the extent that idleness bred dissatisfaction, but I objected to the daily drudgery of enforced duties. I mean to bring about healthful exercise by stimulating their interest and having all services rendered voluntarily through sheer love of their Home, and there is so much to do and so much space to do it in. There are flower beds to make, lawns to keep beautiful, and all this will keep them busy, and in this climate nearly every one of the three hundred and sixty-five days of the year can be spent outdoors. There will be no need to assign work. It is always invitingly before them, and as for asking them to assist in the regular house or farm work, that is not in the plan; they are on a vacation and we will have that work done by younger people. If an emergency arises every one that is able will lend willing hands to help, and that is as it should be. Their interest should be a proprietary one.

The co-operative spirit must prevail if the Home is to meet my expectations and fulfill its mission, and considering that it is only a little more than a year since it was founded and that many things had to be adjusted, we have had but very little difficulty in reconciling the old people to the

change of their mode of life and they are living very harmoniously together. Once in a while we are called upon to arbitrate some difference. Only yesterday Mrs. McGinnis and old Tom Grant got into a dispute anent the ownership of a cutting of choice Martha Washington geranium. It seems the plant was given by a kindly neighbor to Mrs. McGinnis, who immediately planted it in the flower bed she claims as her own and it thrives and blossoms under her care. Yesterday morning she happened to see what she thought was a cutting of her precious flower adorning the flower garden of poor Tom. Well, the old lady isn't bigger than a five-cent piece, but all there was of her was up in arms and what she didn't say to Tom Grant isn't worth recording. Tom stood perfectly aghast at her tirade, drawing himself up with each invective the daughter of Erin hurled at him. Finally, when she paused for breath, he managed to say slowly, impressively, witheringly, "Madam, yer a country-woman of mine, to the shame of ould Ireland, and ye air an ould woman so I can't be telling ye wot oi'm a thinkin' of ye, but I will say this, ye are not telling the truth; if ye's a man oi'd be telling ye, ye're a damn lyar! —it was Mrs. Carter gave me the bit of flower, ye can ask her yerself. Ye ould——ould——go

along wid ye, before oi lose me good manners," and he stalked into the house leaving the culprit convinced of his innocence in spite of herself and the evidence. And yet, Jerry, I took pains to investigate. Mrs. Carter did not give him the plant, and a piece had been broken off of Mrs. McGinnis's geranium. It was a delicate situation to handle; I did not want to betray Tom, for the poor fellow loves flowers and he is too proud to ask for them, and he really did no harm to Mrs. McGinnis's plant and he eased his conscience and made restitution and his peace by sharing a fern with his antagonist. So I pretended I had not heard the controversy, bought them each some flowers, and so peace reigns in the Irish side of our household.

These little incidents are only amusing and really rather add some spice to the daily life of the Home. I rather felt that the battle royal proved that our members were really enjoying the privilege the Home affords in having some personal interest worth the excitement of a quarrel. I would far rather have them belligerent over flowers, than nursing rheumatism and a grouch in their rooms. The blossoms and sunshine will turn the edge of their displeasure—they are the Home's flag of truce.

The new wing is progressing nicely. Mr. Lessing has not been out to the Home for several days. Poor Mrs. Lessing is very ill indeed and he realizes the end is near. I dread to have him left alone; strong man as he has always been, he is pathetically dependent on her. She is the vital part of him. Forty years is a long time to live together, the breaking of the tie will leave him stranded. I know he would give every dollar he possesses to keep her, and he will realize the utter futility of his great wealth when its purchasing power cannot buy the reprieve of her life. It has been a sad week for us all. Captain Lane has lost his wife. She was the first of our members to go, and the Captain is still too dazed to realize his loss. Every one is very kind to him, but he is not very responsive. Perhaps time will heal the wound, but one of the heart-rending things about age is that there is not time enough left to forget in. Her death makes me realize I will see many of my old people pass on, but I must not let it depress me. Surely I ought to be willing to have them come into their own when their time comes and be content to know they are safe and at peace.

Jerry, I would give a great deal to have father reconciled to me, but the first steps toward a reconciliation must come from him. I wrote him

frequently without a reply after Gordon and I came West, and after the culmination of Gordon's last escapade I certainly expected a message of sympathy from father, but not a word. Poor mother never had any backbone and is afraid of him, when really he is only bluffing and in his secret heart he is sorry for me and wants me back home, but he would not acknowledge it for worlds. Mother writes she doesn't dare mention my name for fear of a scene, but old Betty, who is still their general factotum and who also writes me, says that the old gentleman never mentions my name and pretends he does not want to hear from me, but just the same, Betty has caught him reading the letters I write to mother when she is not around to catch him at it. He does not know what I am doing here. I purposely have written nothing of the Home to mother; she is too foolishly imaginative; she would pass sleepless nights imagining I was forced to make a livelihood, and that there was a possibility of my duties embracing the making of beds and scrubbing floors.

When the Home is fully established I'm going to issue a prospectus telling all about it, and send her one. I can picture her amazement and her pride, if I succeed in making it clear that founding a Home for the aged on the lines I have begun

is better than being a divorcee on the ragged edge of society. I will at least live up to the vow "until death do us part," and I find work to be an antidote for vain regrets and heartaches. If only the work will be well done. I want to be an efficient manager; no half measures will satisfy me. There is so much to learn, so much to be done before the Home will become the finest of its kind in the world, and yet I feel I'll succeed. It is so much needed, just the place that we have here, and when the need is great and all is as it should be, success must crown earnest endeavors.

So, Jerry dear, don't worry about me. I'm really and truly content, my days filled to overflowing, leading a wholesome, useful existence, finding time in the busy hours to send you a telepathic message and getting your answer that tells me you understand—and care.

Good night,

EDITH.

LETTER VI

DEAR HIGH CHIEF CONFESSOR:

YOUR letters are just as one would expect from you, if they knew you as I do. Only, Boy, you are romancing and endowing me with attributes I do not possess. Don't do it, Jerry mine, it isn't fair to put one on a pedestal of your own making and expect to have it lived up to. I truly believe it is not from the faults of those we find wanting that disappointment comes, but from our own misconception of another's capabilities. Indeed, I so thoroughly realize my own limitations and know I am of this earth earthy that I cannot bear to have you expect more of me than I can possibly justify.

Of course my work of the Home is altruistic to a certain extent, but I have selfish motives, too. There is the ambition to create as perfect an institution as thought and a knowledge of the need of the aged can suggest; to make the policy embodied in the conception of the Home the one by which other institutions will be patterned; to help teach proper reverence for self-respecting age; for age has its responsibilities, too, and has no license

to disregard them. There is absolutely no excuse for one having reached or passed the three-score and ten allotted them to shame their years, and the lessons taught by the Home of Peace will work both ways; teaching its members how to live up to the standard necessary to insure respect, and those beyond its walls to respect that standard. So you see, Jerry, I'm not unselfish in my motives. I'll be reaching eligibility for admission to a Home for the Aged myself some day and I want the right kind of place to be established before then, and I want to be fit to live in it, too.

We are making great strides in the right direction and the greatest help comes from the members themselves. We have the most beautiful heart-to-heart talks, my family and I, when I tell them of all I hope to bring about and show them just how much they can do to help me succeed, and they do respond; even if they never realized it before, my conception of the ideal Home for them has always been theirs and it is a joy to be a real factor in its accomplishment. Mr. Lessing overheard me one afternoon having my pow-wow with them, and I believe if it had needed anything to convince him that I knew my old people, he would have capitulated then, for he afterward remarked I had no opposition and my way to success was open before me.

As you saw by the clipping I sent you, Mrs. Lessing passed away. My heart bleeds for him in his loneliness. All his children were here when the end came, but have since gone back to their several homes. Only Emily Reeves will remain with her father. I believe she will make her home here now to be near him; I hope she will for he needs her. He came out to the Home with me yesterday and the members vied with each other in being kind to him. He seemed to appreciate that they all understood what his loss meant to him; besides to them he is not the arrogant man of money the world knows, but just a friend who sorely needed the sympathy they so lavishly bestowed. As we were leaving he turned to me and said, "Edith, how could you anticipate the loneliness of age? I never understood it until now and I am so much older than you. Go on with your work, fill the Home with lonely old people, they need each other." And so they do, Jerry, they need companionship as they need food and sleep to survive. There are other things that can make the shady side of life not only bearable but pleasant, but I believe the greatest satisfaction is gained by knowing one is an integral part of a community.

Unfortunately we are crowded from the high-

ways of life too soon by the competition of youth, long before we feel ready for retirement, and it is not possible to close our lives like a book, or to step immediately into another world where interest ceases. It takes years of readjustment to fit into the new order of things, and to realize that growing old gracefully is a real job, the mastery of which can keep one pretty well occupied.

I am hoping to have the new wing completed in less then two months. We will then have a dedication and invite the whole town to it. The members are making plans for the big event. Those who can sew are remodeling gowns for the occasion, and Captain Prime is composing a poem. I wish you could be persuaded to leave your musty law office and be present. Really I think you should arrange to come. I'll promise to get a chaperon so you can stop at my bungalow, and I'll not keep you awake half the night talking about the Home, although I may want to. I have no other inducement except that I can take you motoring, show you the Missions and tell you their histories, and give you glimpses of this God's country that will make you take long breaths of ecstatic delight. You are such a lover of nature that I long to show you how prolific she has been in this Golden West, scattering beauty every-

where. I believe you are afraid of the possible lure of the West. Fear you might be induced to come here to live—and why not? You have no one to keep you in St. Louis, and you have piled up a big enough fortune for your needs, and I am sure you will never marry (more's the pity), so what is to hinder you from coming to California and to me? Think it over Jerry dear; I can't think of a thing against the plan and a hundred in its favor, and I want you.

Yours,

EDITH.

LETTER VII

DEAR JERRY:

I CAN'T imagine what I've said in my last letter to cause the tone in your reply. You see I know you so well that even in written phrases I can detect an off-key. I did not know you would be touchy on the subject of marriage and I believe I am glad to know you have not decided against it. You would be a model husband, Jerry, and oh, such a discriminating father, and you surely deserve happiness, but you have passed the susceptible age. I've never known you to be in love, and you remember you told me when I announced my engagement to Gordon that you never intended to follow in my footsteps. I know you were anxious about my chances with Gordon and that may have prompted the bitterness in your tone, but I know that although I could think of nothing else but him at that time your word sounded final to me, and I have never thought of you as anything but a confirmed bachelor. Besides you have always been my chum and we seemed to hit it off so well together I never gave a thought to another woman, so that the realiza-

tion of your possible marriage comes as a shock and I can't get used to the idea. Will you tell me if you have made a choice? If I know—it will help me get used to the fact of no longer having you to come to, for of course no woman would tolerate our intimacy, and I could not share my confidences with her. I am rather depressed today and not up to writing, but I want to assure you I am glad if you are to find real happiness, and I shall love the lucky girl no matter who she is, for your dear sake.

The weather is beautiful, it is spring here. The early roses are in bloom, and the breeze from the Bay stirs the blood. I am going to motor out to the back country by myself, follow a trail that leads up the mountain and have it out with myself. I've got the "blue devils" and I am going to get rid of them in an environment too majestically beautiful to admit of bad humor, and come back ready to take up my work with a clear brain and cheerful exterior.

Sincerely your friend,

EDITH.

LETTER VIII

My dear Jerry:

AM SO glad to get your long, talky, cheerfully serene letter, and I am inconsistently and selfishly rejoicing there is no immediate prospect of your marrying. I won't anticipate the loneliness that will come to me when some woman can claim your every thought and censor your friendship. As usual I take more than I can give in benefits; your sympathy and your faith in me have been a mighty prop that has sustained me, even when hundreds of miles separated us. Ours has been a wonderful friendship; nothing you could do would make me doubt its disinterestedness and only your marriage can ever again cause a break in it, and yet I realize I should have rejoiced at the possibility of you finding your mate. You have always loved a home and revered woman in spite of your knowledge of them, and I tried hard to believe I would be glad for your sake, but I wasn't. I was very miserable, and try as I would I could not reconcile myself to believing you would some day cease to be Jerry, my one friend. I could put but one construction on the

sentence in your previous letter which said, "Why will you persist in condemning me to the inevitable state of confirmed bachelorhood, believe me I have hope for a happier fate." I had but one thought when I read that; you had, as I should have foreseen, at last capitulated to the one woman. However, if you have not yet found her, "sufficient unto the day be the evil thereof"; I will at least enjoy, as long as I will be allowed, having you for my own dear friend, as you have always been ever since I can remember.

I have been very busy, the new wing is nearing completion and Mr. Lessing and I are selecting the furnishings. The plans for the dedication are well along; Mrs. Carter and Elinor Bly have a fine program arranged and I believe the occasion will be of more than ordinary interest locally, for the gift of Mr. Lessing to the institution of the Home site and the building of the addition has been exploited and Mr. Lessing's identity established, and as the Home is the third institution of its kind to be attempted here, and the only one that survived the first year of existence, the curiosity of the public is aroused and will no doubt be manifested by a large attendance on the day of the formal opening of the Home under the auspices of a qualified Board of Directors.

Mr. Lessing's interest in the progress of the Home and in the details of its management is proving a balm in his bereavement. He forgets himself and his grief in our heated differences, and his temper often has full play at my opposition to some of his views. Several times I have felt that it was a question of sacrificing the vital principles on which I aimed to establish the Home, and rather than do that I preferred to withdraw and let Mr. Lessing and his money prevail, and discharged myself accordingly, but my resignation was never accepted and our disagreements never crystalized into an open rupture. We are both really too deeply concerned in the welfare of our creation to be seriously antagonistic, and I believe Mr. Lessing is as undemonstratively fond of me as I am of him. I somehow understand him thoroughly; know just how to discount his bulldozing tactics and never lose sight of the fine bigness of the real man; and on the other hand he has faith in me. He may question my judgment but he never doubts my motives, and respects my earnestness.

We have the same object in mind, the same enthusiasm, an unlimited capacity for work and the courage of our convictions, so we help each other and find a great joy in the work we are

doing. I do not believe his family share his interest in the Home. It is not surprising that they do not. They all have their own pet charities and fads, and I doubt if they know how keen their father's interest is. The sons visited the Home when they were in the city at the time of their mother's death, but all they could see was only the nucleus of the proposition, and without the vision of greater possibilities it was not much to enthuse over, yet I felt Mr. Lessing's disappointment and appreciated his resentment at their cold appraisement which was unconsciously and unnecessarily harsh. Yet neither of the younger men is unsympathetic; they simply did not know how much of their father had gone into this little section of land on which he had placed the corner-stone of an institution, the need of which he, by the virtue of his many years, knew more of than they.

It was his second daughter, Mrs. Long, who won my heart by her keen appreciation of the possibilities of the Home, and I found myself telling her all about its inception and of its coming greatness, and I believe she sees it as we do, so we have the advantage of one more friendly influence, which is another asset, for in work of this kind there is more or less adverse criticism that

has a psychical effect that can be felt and is hard to overcome. I try to guard against this insidious influence entering the Home, and try, by suggestion, to keep the thoughts of my charges harmonious.

Mr. Lessing said today he thought the time had come to endow the Home, and reminded me I still had much to do to firmly establish and inculcate into the atmosphere of the Home the principles on which it was founded and in which he now fully concurred, and as we are managing the Home on lines differing radically from the methods adopted by other beneficiary organizations, and which were largely experimental, I had taken upon myself years of labor that might try my patience to its utmost limit, and perhaps end in heart-breaking disappointment. Of course he could not discourage me and I renewed my promise to see the proposition through, and have now committed myself indefinitely to a real job—one in which I will keep a strict account of myself, exacting the best there is in me and fulfilling my pledge to age, to give it the deserved recognized place in the problems of life, a place worthy of well-spent years. We shook hands on that promise and on his to endow the Home. We were on our way from View Dale in my motor. I drove him home

and as he bade me good-by (he is going up to Los Angeles tomorrow for a few days) he smiled contentedly, almost happily. As for myself I ought to be supremely satisfied. In so much less time than I counted on when I began the work, its future is assured and yet I cannot shake a feeling of depression, I suppose it is because I am tired; at any rate I won't pass my bad humor to you but bring this letter to a close.

Mother writes all is well with them at home. She is hoping I am having a pleasant time and wants to know if there is real society here—dear mother!—what would she say to my daily intercourse with Duchess Matson, Czarina Riddle and Sir Tom Grant?

Yours,
EDITH.

LETTER IX

DEAR JERRY:

YOUR telegrams and letters of sympathy were duly received. I wondered how you had learned so quickly of Mr. Lessing's sudden death in Los Angeles, until I surmised the news reached you through the newspapers. I cannot tell you all his death means to me. I hardly realize its full significance as yet. It was so sudden I was wholly unprepared for it, unless the feeling of depression when I last saw him was the sensing of the great shadow hovering over him. I shall miss him sorely. Our friendship was very real, in spite of the disparity in our years; some quality in our natures made us very congenial and we had a common, absorbing interest in our Home of Peace.

I saw him daily for months, felt his great personal force that kept pace with my own enthusiastic energy. I never was deceived by the almost brutal bluntness of his manner that at times made him appear hard and unsympathetic, for I had seen too often beneath the surface and knew him for the kindly, sentimental man he really was. I was too dazed at first to give thought to the effect his death

would have on the Home. I only felt the loss to myself. He stood for so much in my life here, the one link to the past, remote as that connection had been in the years before the ship-wreck of my life. He represented an element that promised a foundation of a new existence, a stepping-stone to my own development, not by material assistance, but by encouraging, through his faith in me, a belief in myself. I did not realize how much I depended upon him to stiffen my back-bone, for indeed I was more sensitive of criticism than I let on. He literally blazed a trail on which my reputation was established, not socially, but in business circles, for I had no time for society but needed the endorsement of the latter to succeed in my work.

Not until after his funeral did I realize how great a loss Mr. Lessing's death would be to the old peoples' Home. It came to me suddenly that the whole responsibility of a successful issue of the enterprise now rested upon me. The addition was almost but not quite completed; the furnishings had been ordered but not paid for. Mr. Lessing had intended to provide for the future of the institution, but his sudden passing had prevented this accomplishment. His children's interests were elsewhere. I doubted if they realized how far he had committed himself to help me and to what extent he had obligated me in

authorizing a more rapid progress than the actual capital of the Home warranted without his intended support. There was not a written line that could give me a legal right to ask his heirs to ratify his promises. I felt I could not ask them on so slender a claim as my representation of facts based only upon unsupported verbal understanding, and I also realized my personal resources would be strained to the limit if I were compelled to assume the payment of the cost of the improvements made in the name of the Home by Mr. Lessing, and with Gordon to provide for, the situation was embarrassing.

I spent several miserable days worrying over the situation and planning ways and means to pay every bill, for I meant to go on, when I was unexpectedly called into a consultation with the Lessings, and, Jerry, they have acted as Henry Lessing's children would naturally act. I need not have worried as I did; they never disputed my statement regarding the bills encumbered in the building of the new wing, but I could not bring myself to tell them of his promise to endow the Home, and without hesitation they have agreed to provide the means for the completion and furnishing of the new building. They are a wonderful family, of a dominant, aggressive type both physically and mentally, very much alike in essential

characteristics, but differing vastly individually; each has his own decided viewpoint, and feels his convictions strongly. I was very much impressed as I saw them together at that conference, and could not help but wonder how that great collective physical force would be expended, for they represented power, not only by their individual physical and mental strength but by the wealth that they would control, and I believe because they come of wholesome, clean stock, they will spend their lives and money to good purposes and the world will be all the better for their having lived in it.

It seems strange, Jerry, but I seem to know them so much better than they know me; I suppose it is because Mr. Lessing spoke so freely of them and because I have so much imagination. I would like to believe it was insight, but I have always made my deductions from impressions, rather than through analytical process, and my likes and dislikes are strictly instinctive, so that I feel I am right in my opinion of the Lessing family, and that I will always have them as my friends. It makes me feel less exiled, for I have long since realized that there is nothing so scarce as real friendship, and nothing more worth while. We shall finish the new addition and have it dedicated on the day originally set for the ceremony. I shall be very

busy until it is all over with, and the members duly installed in their new quarters, so I do not believe I will find the time to write you in the meantime, but I'll tell you all about it in my next.

You must not worry about me, you know I'm used to being slapped by Fate just when I begin to believe life has compensations and reach out to enjoy it; perhaps it is to make me less egotistical and to teach me my proper place. I always want to reach goals in a leap and bound, and I suppose I am to be taught to watch my steps and to reach the heights in a chastened spirit. However, it is evident that my future efforts in behalf of my old peoples' Home will have to be on conservative lines calling for close attention to practical details and an exercise of such business ability as I may possess, for I am determined to go on with my original plans for the Home of Peace; I shall have the incentive of the memory of Mr. Lessing's faith in it and in my success, to sustain me even if I am deprived of his support, so I will go on where he left off. Somehow, somewhere, help in the work will come to me. It is too big a thing to abandon. The plan is already in the bud. Some day, Jerry, you will see it in full flower.

Yours,

EDITH.

LETTER X

DEAR JERRY:

THIS is my first opportunity to write you at length. The only recreation I have had these six weeks has been reading your letters. You are very clairvoyant, for nothing else could keep you so closely in touch with my every-day life. My letter-grams necessarily could not tell you much, but I felt I owed you some recognition for your interest in me, and to allay your fears regarding my health, so wired you accordingly. It was dear of you to send me that check for our maintenance fund, for indeed we shall need it. I am hoping the interest that the dedication has aroused will continue to find expression in showering checks into our treasury; at any rate our subscription list has been augmented by some prominent names, and for the time at least there is no immediate need for anxiety as to ways and means to carry on the work. If I can get the public, or just a number of individuals, to get the keynote of our Home for the Aged as Mr. Lessing did, my work would be half done. The public has but one general conception of philanthropic insti-

tutions, and if they give it any thought at all, it is to believe if a roof and three meals and general physical necessities are provided nothing more is required, while I am aiming deeper and look upon these necessities as not requiring more than an ordinary knowledge of housekeeping on a larger scale. It is no great accomplishment to do this; it has been done for ages, every city of any size has its home for aged and has been proportionately proud of this accessory as the pretentiousness of their buildings justified.

What I want to do is to make age recognized, to train for it as it were. It is so inevitable! If it does not come in ten years it comes in twenty and then alas, how many are prepared for it? Even with means to provide the necessities of life, other things are lacking. In the very nature of things age has few friends and fewer interests, unless one wisely keeps apace with the times; and lacking these essentials to contentment one is generally out of tune with the Universe, with only a hopeless, dreary prospect of the last lap to the grave. Jerry, dear, it is all so unnecessary—this preconceived idea of the last years of well-spent lives. Age is, after all, a state of mind; we are just as old as we feel; the natural infirmities of age are largely exaggerated by admitting them, and as long as

there is a breath in our bodies, we are meant to enjoy the gifts of the gods; but we must learn that the flowers are just as sweet, the sunshine as bright and the world as good at eighty as it was at eighteen; we only need to see it, to open our eyes, not to close them, to be willing to receive and to give good cheer and come to the great finale with a smile in our hearts, having earned what lies beyond.

This Home of Peace of mine—it sounds egotistical to call it mine, when it takes the money of others as well as all I can give to sustain it, but it is mine in more than one sense—has become a part of myself. It is like a growing child to me, needing my every thought, my watchful care; and its atmosphere is beginning to reflect something of the spirit of my endeavor. Of course it is not always clear sailing; it is too human and too new not to come against snags, and we have controversies that threaten to become pitched battles before I adjust the difficulty; and it is here I learn my daily lessons, lessons that are essential to the government of an institution filled with the evolutions of life-time habits, temperaments and convictions into peaceful intelligent co-operation in a common interest.

As I prophesied, the dedication was a great suc-

cess. The exercises were held in the beautiful new dining-room. A raised dais was erected in one corner on which the directors and speakers sat, and below this we stationed the musicians. Mr. Lessing's vacant chair stood in its place in the circle which seated the directors; we decorated it with flowers and I felt he was sitting in it and sensed the influence of his presence. I could hardly keep from weeping when the speaker spoke of him and of his loss to the Home as its greatest benefactor, for well chosen as his words were, he could not know how great and deep Henry Lessing's interest was, and what a legacy of faith in it he had left to me to fulfill. I looked at the different directors whom he had appointed, and realized that none of them comprehended fully the motive of the work they had committed themselves to. Judge Goodridge is a natural humanitarian; his is a gentle nature, his mind trained in the grooves of judiciary, and yet I suspect he is an idealist. I do not know him very well. There have been but few stated official meetings of the Board of Directors and these have been strictly of a business nature, the Judge assuming, by virtue of his profession as attorney, the responsibility of launching the Home with legal propriety. He has accepted me on Mr. Lessing's endorsement, and if

he has any doubts of my ability to fill the position of Managing Director, he is too just to express them until I have been given time to prove myself. I shall like him I know, and if he will find time in his busy routine of professional duties to see beneath the surface of my ambition, and learns to just what end Mr. Lessing and I aspired, he will become my warmest advocate and in a large measure take Mr. Lessing's place in helping me to materialize my dreams.

The other director, Mr. J. Scott, is a keen business man. His presence on the Board was simply in compliment to Mr. Lessing's urgent request. He looks upon the Home in the light of an acceptable charity, an additional but justifiable drain on the purses of the charitably inclined, and no doubt frankly questions my motives in fostering it. However, I believe he can be won over, if my accounts prove correct in the monthly trial balance and if I keep the Home out of the receiver's hands or courts of law.

Mr. Colburn is the new man on the Board, taking the place of the banker who resigned in high dudgeon when Mr. Lessing, shortly before his death, tried, in his high-handed way, to force a generous subscription from him as an earnest of his interest in the Home.

Mr. Colburn is undoubtedly bored with his responsibilities as a director; perfectly willing to give me free rein and will only be in evidence at the regular monthly meetings, if he can't get out of coming, and I'll wager will resign just as soon as he decently can.

While the orchestra filled the room with music, my eyes wandered over the audience. Every walk in life was represented, and all ages. I wondered how much all this ceremony meant to them; if any one there had caught the full significance of the place, if they realized that on these premises countless souls would pause for a fleeting time before passing on to the Great Beyond, and as I wondered it came my time to speak. I rose in a kind of dream. From where I stood I could just touch the arm of Mr. Lessing's empty, decorated chair. I had given the speech I was to make considerable thought, yet when I faced that sea of faces I did not remember a word of it. I stood a moment quite still, my eyes resting on the rows of chairs nearest the speakers which were filled with my old people. I saw Captain Prime, his sharp eyes alight with understanding; saw the pathetic listlessness of Captain Lane, and the intent, loving expectation of them all. Slowly the words came; I spoke to my old people only of what lay in my

heart for them, and as I talked I felt the thrill of knowing I had struck a chord in their own souls. I can't recall what I said, Jerry, but whatever it was, it came from the deepest recess of my love for them, and they responded, understood. They saw the Home as I did and I knew from then on they would all do their share. When I ceased there was not a dry eye among them and their faces were illuminated with the radiance of a purpose. I had given them a place in the big work before me, something for them to achieve and I felt in turn I had divided my burden and lightened the load.

It was my first public appearance. I do not know what the consensus of opinion is, but if the nice things that were said are to be relied on I have made a good impression, which I value as an asset to the Home, for the Home will be largely dependent on the opinion of the public, and I no longer have Henry Lessing to endorse me, and after all, I am only a woman, not even having the advantage of having lived here any length of time. Besides, I have a past and a questionable present in Gordon, and I have an unfortunate trait in being conspicuously indifferent to social appraisement, and society likes to have the privilege of passing on one's eligibility to its charmed circle

and resents being denied its prerogatives, so that if this embryonic, great city will take my philanthropy seriously I will be grateful, as the Home, until it is endowed, can only prosper by the good will and esteem of its so-called best people, and to a certain extent the opinion of me will influence the standing of the Home.

I was glad when the dedication was over and the routine of our daily lives could be followed, and I can now take stock of my needs and resources and plan accordingly.

This is the longest letter I have yet written, Jerry, and unless you are really deeply interested you will be bored to death, but writing to you is the only personal indulgence I have. I must have an outlet to my thoughts and you are always a kindly, receptive medium. What a help you would be to me! What worlds we would conquer between us! Yet I'm afraid the only things I wish to vanquish at present are the obstacles in the way of my success—even Gordon has ceased to be a heavy, depressing encumbrance. I don't cease to think of him; I couldn't do that, but I no longer feel that the end of all things has come, for now my first waking thought is the work of the day before me, and an added incentive is the consciousness of pleasure it gives me to tell you all

about it. So with the blessed Home to work for, and you to turn to when the day's work is done, my life is full indeed.

Yours,

EDITH.

LETTER XI

DEAREST JERRY:

I COULD almost detect tears in the words of your last letter, surely my long effusion did not contain cause for sorrow. You must not pity me; don't picture me fighting a silent battle against unknown and untried forces. The trouble is, Jerry, you have me in wrong perspective; you forget I'm no longer young and foolish. You cannot visualize me as approaching middle age, you can only see me as I was years ago when I looked at life through rose-colored glasses. You can't reconcile the girl who drove tandem, flirted, and danced through life, with the serious, chastened woman who has now a real vocation in life. Nor can you picture the young matron who was once hostess to Princess Angeletcheff, managing the domestic routine of an old peoples' Home, nor can you believe I, who never cared where the dollars came from, have learned to acquire and spend them wisely. Once get my past, useless, thoughtless existence out of your mind and give me credit for a fair complement of gray matter and the added years and the experiences thereof, and you

will no longer worry over my passionate endeavor to succeed in establishing an old folk's Arcadia.

It had to be something, Jerry; all the natural force of my nature that had gone to waste cried out for something to expend itself on, and, thank heaven, my tastes did not run to militant reforms, for if I was as determined to enforce prohibition, for instance, as I am to establish the Home of Peace, Carrie Nation wouldn't be in the same class with me, and an ax, not a hatchet, would be symbolic of my enterprise and destruction; and as for calling my work depressing—that is nonsense. If I saw only bent backs, lame legs and blind eyes—yes—but I look beyond these infirmities and what I find is not depressing. In fact, our Home has its comedy; there are more things to laugh over than to bemoan. The trouble is, none of us laugh half enough, and reach old age forgetting the art. Fortunately my sense of humor is as keen as ever and it stands me in good stead, for I more often settle what apparently seems a serious problem by turning the incident into a laugh; once a laugh is established the serious aspect evaporates and the cause is forgotten. No, Jerry, my friend, there is no reason for your compassion. I am intensely interested; I have the same absorbing enthusiasm for my work that a

painter or sculptor has for his. I am painting a picture in life and my figures are real people, interesting individualities, with the background of a fruitful past, who know life as it really is because they have been part of it so long.

My days are all too short for all I have to do; every hour is full to its last minute. I have an office in town now where I transact the business of the Home. Elinor Bly is my secretary and Mrs. Carter, my able assistant. I begin my day's work there, read and dictate letters, answer inquiries, and interview applicants, pay bills, order supplies and, in fact, perform all the offices of a woman of business. Then I motor to the Home. It is a six-mile drive within sight of the Bay and I love the smell of the sea that reaches me as I speed along. Then I come to the country roads lined on either side with orange and lemon trees or a border of straggling eucalyptus, a turn toward the east and the Home is before me. Old-fashioned, rambling, with vines reaching to its weathered, shingled roof, its many windows glistening in the sunlight, its wide veranda extending invitingly in front—it's a beautiful place to me—and when the sound of my motor brings welcoming faces to greet me, I feel more than repaid for my day's labor and am quite content—almost happy.

I have induced Emily Reeves, who is now living in the city, to take her father's place as a director. She did not want to do it, but her sister, Mrs. Long, helped me persuade her. Emily says she has not my understanding of old people; she prefers the companionship of youth, but I feel confident when she knows our people she will like them; as for the members, they are shyly offering her a welcome. That she is her father's daughter goes a long way with them, for they loved him. She has built and furnished a dear little modern cottage for two, the second that has been added to the Home, and has named it after the daughter she lost. It is already occupied. The cottage plan is going to be very popular and many of our citizens are planning to follow Mrs. Reeves' example and erect cottages as memoriams to those they loved. It is a pretty idea, a far better monument than one of stone in a cemetery, and I shall encourage it, for it is carrying out the general scheme I had in mind when I planned the Home, and I have no doubt but that a few years hence we will have the main building surrounded by dozens of cottages, each with its tiny flower garden which will entice the occupants into the open air and give the healthful exercises needed, in the care of their flowers.

I am trying to guard against the tendency to house themselves too closely; this habit is more noticeable in the members who have not lived in Southern California, for you must know, Jerry, that the Home is attracting old people from everywhere and it is not improbable that every state in the Union will be represented here before long. Southern California has been made for old people; it adds years to their lives, one reason being they do not need to combat the elements; the climatic conditions are ideal, giving them the opportunity to spend most of their waking hours out of doors. I am often asked all kinds of foolish questions regarding the Home; some I can answer satisfactorily, but others have no logical answers. I was asked if I could guarantee happiness to the members. I think it rather an unfair supposition to hold anyone responsible for the happiness of another, for the essence of happiness must come from within, but if absolute freedom, comfort, and beautiful surroundings can produce the state of mind called happiness, we come pretty near distributing it. The other day I had a sample of one kind of unalloyed enjoyment, which was an object lesson by which I benefited.

Three old ladies were sitting on the veranda busy with some needle-work, their tongues keeping

pace with their needles, and I overheard them criticising the really splendid noonday meal in the most scathing terms; not an article of food served escaped their condemnation. I was aghast at the unjust tirade and the lack of appreciation displayed. I turned toward them, meaning to show my displeasure at their conduct, for disloyalty and fault-finding are considered the cardinal sins at the Home, but I stopped suddenly as the picture of the three old women met my gaze. They did not see me, but continued to rock backward and forward in perfect rhythm to their chatter, with the most benign and contented expressions on their faces. I suddenly realized that as I promised myself to help make them happy, the present occasion was proof that the cook was innocently helping me, and a single word of reproof would defeat my ends. I slipped noiselessly back into the house concluding no harm had been done, for if it had not been the dinner, necessarily something else would have been the medium of expressing their opinion, and exercising the right of free speech gave them unmitigated satisfaction.

So you see, Jerry, I am learning to be philosophic, to take things and people as I find them, and am guiding the affairs of the Home on broad lines. Of course there will always be some who will

take advantage, but I shall consider each individual case on its merits, and I believe will find the way to adjust the difficulties as they arise, but I'm determined that the faults of a few shall not alter the tone of our little community and that the present policy of not restricting our members by iron-clad and narrow rules shall prevail. As long as no one encroaches on the rights of the other members or does not injure anyone but himself, I shall not interfere and I do hope I never will have occasion to dismiss any of my old people. I want them all to love their home too dearly to want to forfeit the right to remain.

Mother is urging me to come home on a visit; she believes father and I would become reconciled if I came. Of course I won't go, I am far too busy, besides I am not seeking the reconciliation. On my part there never has been an estrangement, and father loves me too well to be really angry. It is just a pose; he has strutted and declared himself, and he can't bring himself to acknowledge he was just bluffing. Only mother takes him seriously. It would please him immensely and save his pride if I would enact the part of the prodigal, but I won't. When I am successful in having perpetuated the Home I shall invite him to visit it as if nothing had ever occurred to displease him,

and mark my words, he will come and be glad of the opportunity.

Do you ever see them? If you do, don't dare tell them what I am doing. It must be a surprise and I want it to be a startling one. By the way, send me a late photograph of yourself. I want to see if you are still looking shamefully young. I hope not; I feel as old as Methuselah and I don't want you to get too far behind me.

Yours,

EDITH.

LETTER XII

DEAR JERRY:

I LITTLE thought when I wrote you last that many months would elapse before I again wrote you a detailed account of the progress I was making in establishing the Home of Peace. Your sudden decision to make the grand tour took my breath away; you seemed fairly rooted, and St. Louis is your natural habitat; besides, you would never come to California to see me and I believed your law business had you firmly in its tentacles, and that you believed the price of a protracted holiday was bankruptcy or sudden death. I did not begrudge you your long deferred vacation, although I felt rather forsaken, and your postals and sketchy letters telling of the pleasures you were having in foreign places, did not invite replies that had anything in common with an old peoples' Home and consequently I deferred writing of my work until you were again settled at home and asked me to resume.

I will never be able to account for your aversion to visiting Southern California; it is not flattering to me, but if you have valid reasons and don't

want to give them, I suppose I will have to be content with the vague promise in your last letter of some time surprising me. I know when I do see you I shall be too happy to question your delay and the fact that you have come at last will content me. I have lost the thread of my narrative and cannot remember just where I left off, so shall just give you a general resumé of the last two years' accomplishment which will cover the main incidents and lead up to what the Home is today.

You will be surprised to hear that Tom is my right-hand bower and does a world of work for me. When he first came to me nearly eighteen months ago, broken in health, with only the remnant of his fortune left, he seemed a grave responsibility, for he had lost more than his money and health, he had lost all interest in life. Something happened to him in the years of his wanderings of which he never speaks, which has struck deeply into his old carefree, optimistic nature and made him old before his time. He refused even to visit the Home, or to take my enthusiasm seriously. I ceased to urge him to drive out there with me, but took him on long back-country drives instead. He went to please me and because he was indifferent where or how he spent the time so long as I did not force people on him. The first

interest he took was in watching Lee Son working in my garden. Tom always had a weakness for flowers and I believe I have often written you what a genius my Chinaman is with them. Gradually, as his health came back, Tom began to spend more time with Lee Son, listening to his jabbering while he transplanted and seeded, and then he, too, took to cutting slips and planting them, and before he realized it himself he was intensely interested in watching the results of his labors. I was delighted, for I knew that any interest was better than none, and I encouraged him without letting him know I noticed the change in him. The next improvement was shown in his desire to drive the motor, and as I have but one, it naturally came to pass he was lured into driving me to the Home. He was surprised at what he saw, charmed with the environment, and through his interest in flowers he met my cottagers whose gardens he was admiring.

No one can visit the Home and meet its members without being impressed with the courtesy shown by them to guests and the proprietary pride they have in the Home of their adoption. It is a colony of gentle-folk, men and women who have not forgotten the usages of polite society and, having the opportunity to extend hospitality, offer

it most graciously, giving the recipient who may have come to patronize, the consciousness of having been honored instead. I'm very proud of my members, Jerry, it is a joy to see them together. Handsome, white-haired men and women, every one of them my worthy, capable lieutenants, who are the real creators of our model Home.

What I have striven for is largely in evidence, the co-operative spirit. You can see it in the many really beautifully kept gardens, in their orderly rooms, in their intercourse with each other and in their loyalty to me. I can easily prove my assertions that in less than five years' trial I have demonstrated, my theories have not been impractical, and that the broad policy I adopted of recognizing individual characteristics and preventing the curtailment of personal liberty, has been the greatest factor in the spiritual success of the Home.

I do not want to give the impression that my people are endowed with more than the usual allotment of human virtues or that they are divinely faultless, for they are very real, every-day folk, but in circumstances giving maximum comforts, absolute liberty and a minimum cause for complaint, the Home basks in harmonious influence and every stranger senses it.

Tom was impressed. He looked at me curiously

several times during our drive home, as if he could not quite identify me in the role in which he had just seen me. He is not demonstrative, as you know, and yet his tone was quite tender when he finally said, with one of his whimsical smiles, "Peter Pan has grown up after all. We will have to reconstruct our opinion of you, Sis; after seeing your Eldorado the old version doesn't fit; you are making youth take a back seat, and age the great thing, the goal." Then he quoted Ben Ezra "the best is yet to be, the last of life, for which the first was made" and from that day on Tom has shared my work.

Tom has just enough income not to be compelled to work for his living and he cares nothing for money beyond procuring for him his needs of the moment, and just now he doesn't want anything more than his means can easily gratify so that he can donate his services to the "cause," and I am very glad to accept them.

We have five additional adjoining acres which was a gift to the Home from one of our members. It gives us another old-fashioned house and several smaller buildings. We have remodeled the house to accommodate more members, and moved one of the smaller buildings into the circle of cottages and fitted it up as a kitchenette, which the mem-

bers use to prepare special dishes and their afternoon teas. This privilege is greatly appreciated, for no matter how good a cook we have, there are times when the old people have a hankering for some favorite dish cooked by themselves, and nothing can satisfy them more than the privilege of indulging their appetites.

I read just the other day a humorous perversion of Herbert Spencer anent hunger; there is truth in the statement that our natures are influenced by our appetites and I am afraid the less incentive we have for strenuous effort the more thought we give our stomachs, and we must accept his logical conclusion "that hunger is the prime incentive to every human motive in its elemental incitement." If there is one thing my old people like to do better than anything else it is to eat, not so they can live, for they would live longer if they ate less, but because it makes living more enjoyable.

Tom has not yet learned to close his eyes to the shortcomings of our members and holds age accountable, and it is an unjust arraignment. If you have accomplished what you have worked for there is no ignominy in old age, and it is a matter of self-education if you have become grossly selfish, useless and dissatisfied, and if there are no past successes to your credit, age is not to blame.

Youth is the time of folly and bad judgment, wisdom is the axiom of age and we should not deny ourselves the benefits thereof. Tom laughs at my logic and accuses me of plagiarism, but the acceptance of palpable facts is not plagiarism and I see daily the need of an educational campaign that fixes the blame for unlovely old age where it belongs, upon the individual, and as one never is too old to profit by lessons learned, the schooling should go on to the grave.

The success of the Home, measured by business standards, has been phenomenal. We have a sinking fund, do not owe a dollar and have an A1 credit for solvency. We have added many cottages and have a library. We also have made a park of several of our acres, which has added to the beauty of the setting of the Home.

We are to have the hospital I hoped for some day, for means for its materialization have been provided for by an old, childless couple who have followed the fortunes of the Home since its inception, and who will use their rather generous fortune in furthering my plans. The sad thing about this is when we get the hospital they will no longer be among the living. I wish people would not postpone intended gifts until they are no longer here to enjoy the good they do. Some day

I'll tell you all about these future benefactors, for they are an interesting study.

Well, Jerry dear, I hope I have not been guilty of too much repetition, but two years is a long gap to fill in and while you were away gathering fresh inspiration in unfamiliar and pleasant places, I have stayed on my job. My work has become largely routine, but I never have lost my keen enjoyment in it nor have my dreams lessened in magnitude. I still have my vision before me and the Home is gradually becoming a realization of what I hoped for. A few years more and I can sit back and survey it with satisfaction, but there is much to do before I can write *finis*. Write to me often, Jerry, I need your letters.

EDITH.

LETTER XIII

My dear Jerry:

I HAVE had all kinds of unusual experiences in my time as you well know, and have encountered as large a variety of humanity as any one, but I believe the incidents I am going to recite in this letter and the people connected with them will have to be given prominent places in my rather checkered career, if for no other reason than that they afforded me several unique sensations. I know that to a certain extent I'm considered rather unusual, and in some people's minds my connection with the Home is looked upon as a medium of self-aggrandizement, but I never dreamed any one would doubt my honesty, much less come to me with a proposition that savored of cheap melodrama and had all the elements of criminal action.

You remember my telling you of the old couple who had arranged to furnish the means to build a hospital and to endow it? Well, this act of the old couple inspired the plot of the play.

Nearly every day I am consulted on the merits of the Home, so when one morning several months

ago the secretary ushered a stranger into my private office, I was fully prepared to answer the many pertinent questions she asked regarding our institution. She was a stout, heavy-boned woman, rather short in stature and of advanced age, wearing glasses that magnified the defect in one eye, but showed the other clear and sharp as steel. She spoke with short precision, using glibly excellent English. Her personality was forceful but not pleasing, and she impressed me as having lived hard. She introduced herself as Mrs. Childs, and after she had satisfied her curiosity and apparently taken my measure, she explained that her sister and her husband had been reading of the Home since its inception, and had sent her to make the inquiries preliminary to doing something for it. I expressed my gratification and invited my visitor to bring her relatives to visit the Home.

It was a week later that the invitation was accepted, and I met the sister, a Mrs. McCurdy. She was ten years older than Mrs. Childs, tall, severe looking, and pronounced and open in her disapproval of Mrs. Childs. I felt rather sorry for the younger woman who, I presumed, was dependent on Mrs. McCurdy, and made to feel it, for every observation or suggestion Mrs. Childs made was ridiculed or contradicted. However,

Mrs. McCurdy must have been satisfied with what she saw and learned on her visit of investigation, or Mrs. Childs had inadvertently criticised it adversely and aroused a contrary spirit, for I was sent for a few days later, and in a consultation with both Mr. and Mrs. McCurdy, in which the Home's needs were discussed, I expressed my desire for a fully and modernly equipped hospital. It was a big thing to ask for, and I had but little hope that the wish would be gratified. But after some discussion both Mr. and Mrs. McCurdy agreed to donate the means for building this addition, and promised to take such legal steps as were necessary to secure the amount required for this purpose and to endow it.

Ordinarily I would have been wild with delight at the prospect of another realization of my dreams, but there was something in the atmosphere of that family which was out of tune with the fine thing they proposed to do. Old Mr. McCurdy, who had the smile of a saint and who had to catch what was being said through an ear trumpet, babbled with childish delight of the punishment in store for the ingratitude of various far-away nephews and nieces and of how this arrangement would "fix them," while Mrs. McCurdy declared several times, with a malignant

glance at her sister, that none of her relatives would get another dollar from her to waste in ungodly living and she was not going to be afraid to go to sleep at nights because of some will she might make.

It was horrible, this lack of harmony at their age, and I was glad to cut the interview short as possible and to get away. Mrs. Childs apparently took no notice of the side remarks, in fact, emphasizing the need of legally safeguarding the property so that no one could prevent the carrying out of the McCurdy's plans. It was finally agreed that they would consult some trustworthy attorney to suggest the safest method of securing the hospital which was to bear their name, to the Home. I suggested several attorneys, among them Judge Goodridge, and as they knew of his unblemished reputation and surmised he would not charge them for his services, which latter consideration had considerable weight in their penuriously thrifty minds, he was selected to draw up the necessary document.

Poor Judge Goodridge! He had his hands full during the weeks that followed, for they changed their plans every time a contract was drawn. The object of absolutely cutting off their kin was uppermost in their minds, and unfortunately, it was evident the Home was used as an instrument with

which to vent their spiteful hatred, and not until every word of the contract assured them that there was no loophole by which their distant heirs might defeat their object, did they feel satisfied to affix their signatures to deeds of valuable property that at their death became the property of the Home.

I was thoroughly disgusted with the whole proposition when the business was concluded. I was given the deeds to hold in trust with explicit orders never to let them out of my possession, and to record them the moment one or the other of the donors passed away. I wanted the hospital badly and I wished I could feel more elated at the prospect of this valuable addition to the Home, but candidly, Jerry, if I were the only one to be considered in the matter I would refuse to accept the gift under the circumstances. I fully appreciate the McCurdys' right to give what is indisputably theirs, to give as they see fit, and in this case there are no immediate or dependent heirs to suffer, excepting of course the sister, who, by the way, is provided for by the consideration exacted in the deeds which gives her a membership in the Home, and I must say if she is disappointed in the disposition of her sister's considerable means she is too game to let on, for she never by word or look expressed her chagrin, and I made a mental

reservation to use my influence with the Board of Directors to do something for her when the money came into our hands.

After the matter had been duly arranged I hoped they would not call upon me again as I had no desire to cultivate their acquaintance, but I was constantly asked on one pretext or another to visit them, and I soon learned I would have to earn the hospital by drafts made on my time and patience. The McCurdys were very well pleased with the arrangement. They took pride in posing as rich philanthropists and in the important figure they cut in the affairs of the Home by virtue of their gift, and thoroughly enjoyed discussing the future McCurdy Hospital with me. On Mrs. McCurdy's suggestion we had plans drawn and submitted to them. I read up on everything I could find pertaining to hospitals, and had formed a reliable conception of just what we would require, not alone for service for our members, but in operating for public use, so as to add to the financial resources of the Home.

I confess I began to anticipate some of the pleasure I would have when the plans became a fact and I could develop this new interest, and gradually I was becoming less prejudiced against the donors. On some of these visits I was asked to

bring the deeds in my possession for inspection. I know that in spite of their professed faith in me they felt safer when on examining the seals of the packet entrusted to me, they found them intact and in the same condition as when given into my keeping.

The Sunday following after I wrote you last I received a phone message from Mrs. Childs asking me to call, as Mrs. McCurdy was very ill and asking for me. I, of course, responded and was met at the door by Mrs. Childs and ushered into the living-room which opened directly from the street. A tall, stately, fine looking woman rose as I entered. Mrs. Childs, in a whisper, introduced her as Mrs. Philips, and then beckoned me to follow her into an adjoining room. Mrs. Philips, who had only slightly inclined her head at the introduction, followed also. As they tiptoed their way into the room, I felt a queer sensation of impending trouble and unconsciously braced myself on the defensive. Mrs. Childs, in a low, subdued voice, began the conversation by explaining Mrs. McCurdy's illness. She was plainly nervous and ill at ease and her manner lacked her usual assurance. Somehow I was not surprised when she told me her sister had changed her sentiments regarding the disposition of her money in her favor and had requested her to tell me so,

but I did not believe her; she did not look directly at me while speaking, but as I was watching closely—I felt I needed to—I saw her glance at Mrs. Philips, who had maintained her silence, but whose eyes studied my face with penetrating persistence—that she caught Mrs. Childs' look and answered it imperceptibly I had no doubt—for Mrs. Childs, hesitating, feverishly went on with her lesson, convincing me she had been coached by the younger woman. I made no reply, and she, gaining fluency as she went on, again told me her sister had ordered her to get the deeds from me at once as she no longer intended to give her money to the Home, but to herself and other heirs and that she had made her will accordingly.

I don't know why I should have doubted her, Jerry, for it would be a natural thing for Mrs. McCurdy to do; and Mrs. Childs had never given me a reason to believe she cared a whoop for her sister's money, but the presence of that dark-haired woman spoiled the truth of the story. I knew somehow that it was a lie and that the stranger was back of it. She is about half the age of Mrs. Childs, not more than thirty-five years old, her features regular and pronounced, her mouth large, full-lipped, sensual, her deeply-set eyes cold and calculating; a woman with an iron will and an

unscrupulous selfishness—at least that was what I saw and I disliked her instinctively.

I knew Mrs. McCurdy's room was just beyond the living-room and back of where we sat, and I surmised the whispering was not for fear of disturbing her but the anxiety to keep her from knowing of my presence. In order to test my suspicions I raised my voice and told them distinctly I could not give up the deeds, as I had accepted them as a trust for a specific purpose and could not give them up to any one; that if it were true Mrs. McCurdy regretted what she had done, she would be compelled to take certain legal steps to cancel the obligation and that I did not doubt if the Board of Directors were convinced of Mr. and Mrs. McCurdy's change of heart, matters could be satisfactorily arranged. While I spoke Mrs. Childs looked apprehensively at the closed door and asked me to lower my voice, but I paid no attention and walked to the door and opened it while speaking. When we reached the living-room a nurse came from Mrs. McCurdy's room opposite and said her patient had recognized my voice and insisted upon seeing me. Before either of them could stop me I followed the nurse into Mrs. McCurdy's room. I did not find her as ill as I expected. She was sitting erect in bed, her face

was flushed, but more with anger than with fever. She beckoned me imperiously to her side and asked me in a whisper how I happened to come, and asked suspiciously what Mrs. Childs had been talking to me about, and without waiting for my reply to either question exclaimed feverishly, "Don't let them get those deeds from you, I know they will try; Liza is like putty in Mrs. Philips' hands; she is a wicked, designing woman. I told Liza not to bring her here and yet she comes." I saw she was growing excited and I calmed her by assuring her the deeds were safe and no one would get them from me.

I heard someone at the door so I began to talk of something else. Mrs. Childs entered the room and solicitously asked me not to allow her sister to overdo by too long a visit. She evidently had stopped to consult her friend before following me and hoped nothing more than what she overheard had been said; she endeavored to get rid of me as soon as possible. As I had learned all that was necessary I left the room, and avoiding the attempt at adroit quizzing, I left the house, returned home, and told Tom all about it. He advised me to be careful and to tell my experience to Judge Goodridge, but thought the Judge would be inclined to credit me with too much imagination.

Early next morning I was called to the phone and was surprised to learn Mrs. Philips was speaking. She asked me to meet her at a rendezvous near the McCurdy house, explaining she had something important to tell me. I hesitated a moment and then reluctantly consented to meet her on the corner designated, curious as to what the next move would be. I inquired after Mrs. McCurdy, but she hung up without replying. After thinking the matter over I decided I did not want to meet Mrs. Philips as she requested and had my maid phone her that I would see her in my office instead, if she had anything of importance to communicate. I had hardly more than arrived at my office when she phoned asking me to receive her in a quarter of an hour. I consented, and again asked her of news of Mrs. McCurdy, and, as before, she cut off the line without answering my question. It must have been because I was suspicious of her anyway that I determined to learn how Mrs. McCurdy was and why she refused to give me the information.

I called up the McCurdy number and Mrs. Childs answered the ring. She asked who was speaking before replying to my inquiry regarding her sister's health; her voice stiffened when I gave my name, but she replied coldly and evenly that

her sister was no better and hung up the receiver before I could question further. Tom was in the office listening to the one-sided conversation at the phone and when I told him what had been said, his face darkened and he asked me to let him take a hand in the game. He didn't wait for me to give him permission but stalked to the phone and called up the McCurdy number. I heard him ask who was speaking and then he coolly said, "This is Doctor Taylor speaking; I want a word with the nurse attending Mrs. McCurdy." Then, after a brief delay, he again spoke, "Is this the nurse? This is Doctor Taylor. How is Mrs. McCurdy?" I waited breathlessly, expecting—I don't know what—then realized I was not surprised when I heard him exclaim, "Dead! When did she die?" As he hooked the receiver he turned to me and quietly remarked, "You're mixed up with some crooks, Sis; Mrs. McCurdy died last night; better let me talk to this Mrs. Philips." "No," I answered, "this is my job and I'll see it through. I have the advantage of them to the extent of knowing Mrs. McCurdy is dead when they want to keep that fact from me." Just then Mrs. Philips swept in. She glanced at Tom curiously and asked to see me alone. I took her into my private office, and the door no sooner closed on

us when she handed me a folded note. I read it through carefully twice before speaking. My heart was pounding and I knew I was trembling, even if my hands were steady, for the note purported to be an order from Mrs. McCurdy for the deeds and as I had become familiar with Mrs. McCurdy's handwriting, I knew the order was a forgery.

She watched me in intense silence and when I looked up she was waiting determinedly for my answer. "I'm sorry, Mrs. Philips," I said, conventionally, "but the case stands as it did yesterday. I cannot give these papers up until the legal formalities giving me the right to do so are complied with." Her face hardened and she angrily asked me if I dared dispute an imperative order, that no law could condone my actions in refusing to give up property to its rightful owner, that Mrs. McCurdy was waiting for the deeds. I did not reply at once and Mrs. Philips presumed I was weakening, for she urged a number of arguments for me to consider. Finally I said, "I'll tell you what I'll do, Mrs. Philips, I'll go to Mrs. McCurdy's and if she assures me she wants the deeds I'll see that she gets them within an hour after I leave her presence."

Mrs. Philips had not sat down when she entered my office and had walked about the room as she

talked. She stopped short and looked at me, startled, then went to the window and stood looking out for some time. She turned toward me slowly and in an altered voice began, "I had hoped to do both Mrs. McCurdy and Mrs. Childs a good turn by delivering this note to you as soon as I could after it was written and to bring back the deeds, but I find you are a hard woman, you want your pound of flesh and that you are willing to be a party to a great wrong, for it would be wrong if Mrs. Childs is deprived of what should rightfully come to her; if you were not, you would give me the deeds as Mrs. McCurdy requested, without further proof of her wishes, for unfortunately you cannot do as you suggest. You cannot ask Mrs. McCurdy if she wants the deeds, for she wrote that note last night an hour before she died!"

What she expected me to do I don't know, but she shrank as if I had struck her when I calmly replied, "I knew Mrs. McCurdy was dead, as I know this is a forgery," and pointed to the note in my hand. With a cry of rage she sprang forward and before I could prevent it she had snatched the sheet of paper from me and torn it to bits. I was furious, and disgusted with myself for carelessly allowing the evidence of the forgery to be taken from me, and I ordered her to leave my

room. I cannot recall all I said but I certainly expressed my opinion of her and Mrs. Childs, and declared the deeds would reach the recorder's office as soon as I could get them there, and that as I knew what Mr. and Mrs. McCurdy's wishes were I would carry them out under any circumstances.

My anger cooled hers. She paced the length of my office several times, then coolly sat down by my desk at which I was standing. She deliberately took up the matter as if there had never been a word of dispute. She pictured Mrs. Childs as a wronged woman devoting her life to her sister and brother-in-law and asked me as woman to woman to help her right an intended injustice. It was good acting, and if I had not known that the past life of Mrs. Childs had much to do with Mrs. McCurdy's contempt for her, and if my instinct had not warned me that Mrs. Philips was unscrupulous, I might have been made to feel that my part in the domestic drama had been inexcusably cruel, and that in some measure the women were justified in the attempt to secure the comparatively large fortune for Mrs. Childs' use, but their conduct strengthened my belief in the reasons for Mrs. McCurdy's actions. She had told me Mrs. Childs had lost the fortunes of her two husbands in gambling and riotous living in New York, and that

money had been a curse to her, and while at the time I disliked Mrs. McCurdy for exposing her own sister, I felt now that her provision enabling the sister to spend her last days in comfort, away from the possible temptations that were her undoing, was wise if restricted, and that her foresight in distrusting the Philips woman was justified. While I was thinking this, Mrs. Philips' voice was growing more persuasive, encouraged by my silent attention, and finally she played her trump card when she offered me ten thousand dollars to give up the deeds without recording them.

Jerry, I saw red then—I never have been as angry and I hope I never will again, for I wanted to strike her. I don't remember what I said, but she was standing over me menacingly when Tom strode into the room. He was cool as he always is; he pointed to the door and said tersely, "Get out, or I'll call the police!" She glared at him a moment, speechless, then turned and walked to the door; there she stopped and fairly hissed, "You haven't heard the last of this; that money will never go to that miserable Home." She left the room, slamming the door after her.

I was glad I had Tom to cling to for I was all in. The storm had left me weak and trembling. It was a half hour before I pulled myself together

and on Tom's advice I went to Judge Goodridge with the story. He was as indignant and sympathetic as I could wish and advised me to record the deeds at once, which I did.

It is all a horrible mess, Jerry, a phase of the work as unlooked for as it is disagreeable. I suppose we will have trouble, although until Mr. McCurdy passes away we do not come into actual possession, and as the deeds have been drawn to fully protect the Home, we ought to have legal solidity to our claims when the time comes to test them. Still I wish it were Mr. Lessing who had provided the means for the hospital. There would be nothing then to mar my satisfaction in its possession.

Tell me, Jerry, if I acted rightly or wisely. I don't want my love for the Home to warp my sense of fitness or to make me misconstrue my duty. All that comes to the Home must have the sanction of a clear conscience, and I must say the strenuous episode of the McCurdy gift has left me floundering. As Tom says, "I don't know where I'm at."

If you know, tell me.

Yours,
EDITH.

LETTER XIV

DEAR JERRY:

EVENTS are happening with disturbing regularity in the McCurdy matter. I know I'm deeply involved in a plot to deprive the Home of the money left it by the McCurdy deeds. Back of the scheme is Mrs. Philips; it isn't hard to find her motive. Mrs. Childs is for some reason in her power either by some knowledge of questionable facts in the life of the older woman, or by a hypnotic influence, under which Mrs. Childs is unconsciously bending, for she is not a naturally weak woman. In spite of her age, her mentality is unimpaired and her character, self-willed and obstinate; or it may be that she is an inveterate gambler and I know by my own sad experience with Gordon's gambling proclivities, that the passion blinds every moral sense and that any risk will be taken to carry a point.

The two women have not given up the McCurdy money. If the deeds could be set aside legally they would have had recourse to the law before this, but the documents were too carefully drawn for them to risk a lawsuit, for I know they have con-

sulted a number of attorneys without receiving encouragement. An unknown attorney who came from Los Angeles called on me; he was suave, diplomatic and persuasive, but when his arguments failed to impress me, he succeeded in conveying a hidden threat as to what might befall me if my opposition took active form. He did not frighten me in the least, although I confess the whole affair sickens me in its unsavory details.

There is the principle involved of doing a duty as prescribed, and the desire to thwart the efforts of an unscrupulous woman to deprive the Home of what rightfully and legally belongs to it, but I have never come in contact with this element before and my whole nature is in revolt against it, and yet I am on my mettle. They have directed their enmity to me personally and their object is not only to gain their purpose, but to discredit me in this community, so I am armed on the defensive. The Home must not suffer and I must carry out the terms of my trust, no matter how bitterly I may suffer in the conflict.

Up to this time the Home has progressed without serious backsets. We have lost many of our members by the Grim Reaper, and others have come to fill the vacant places. Gradually, but surely, the personnel of the members has improved. The

Home attracts the gentle class by its superior advantages, the lack of restrictions, the opportunity for individuality, its sense of independence and co-operative interests appealing to the class of people who hitherto had looked upon Homes for Aged as hopeless places of penance which stigmatized them as objects of undeserved charity, and exiled them from their fellows.

The Home is no longer experimental; it is a success! I now hope for an endowment to perpetuate it. Mr. Lessing would be happy to see our picture almost completed, and who knows but what his influence was actually with me as I felt it to be, for often when obstacles loomed up discouragingly big, I had only to think of what he would do in a like situation and almost miraculously the way would be clear.

I have never asked his family to help me. Of their own accord they have liberally subscribed each year to the maintenance fund and I have not only managed to meet the expenses and add improvements as the years passed on, but have been able to add to the Sinking Fund, so that at this writing I am not anxious as to our present needs, and am trusting the future to meet emergencies as they arise.

Tom is now in good health. He never was ro-

bust in spite of his fine physique and ruddy complexion, but his interest in things and people has been reawakened. We dine out now and again, and give little informal dinners ourselves, for we have made some really congenial friends and it is rather a relief to get out of harness occasionally and take a breathing spell in another atmosphere. Tom's advent to my home has been an advantage in many ways; we are very chummy, we like the same plays, books and people, and he has never lost his active interest in my work. He saves the Home the salary of an overseer, and as we do rather extensive farming, he has taken up the study of agriculture and his services are of real monetary value, and that has been one of the reasons for our growing Sinking Fund.

But, Jerry dear, he is still young enough to marry, and then I shall be alone again unless you will consent to take his place. We are getting to the discreet age and our platonic friendship would not be questioned, besides we are as much like brother and sister as two variously constituted beings can be, with the addition of having a keener insight into the depths of our natures, which is not true of Tom and myself.

Oh, Jerry dear, why will you let the years roll on without coming to see me; our letters are illu-

minative and keep us in close touch with each other, but do you realize we will meet almost as strangers? It has been so long since we met. We are no longer very young and if you are visualizing the gay young woman of eight years ago, you will not recognize the serious woman of affairs whose hair has suspicious silvery gleams in it, and if I saw your disappointment when we meet, my heart would be broken, for, Jerry mine, I'm still Peter Pan at heart, inside of me has not grown up and I want my playmate, I want him mighty bad.

So come, Jerry mio, to your

EDITH.

LETTER XV

DEAR JERRY:

I SUPPOSE I will have to content myself with the promise in your last letter of coming when you can wind up your business, but it is unsatisfactory when one is so eager to have you here. Now, Jerry, don't make silly speeches. I like flattery but I cannot believe a man is not affected by the ravages of time. You have always idealized me and it has been embarrassing to realize that some day you will see me just as I am, and it will come when the glamor of youth is no longer there to charm, but if the years of my life that have had more than their quota of sorrow have given me something in place of the attractions of which I was robbed, and you can find beneath the wreckage some reason for your illusions to cling to, I shall be very glad, for memory has a tenacious hold on my sentiments and my emotions span the years since you and I met, and in thought and affection time has not effected a change; you are now and always will be the one element in my existence that has brought no regret or a tinge of sorrow. It seems strange that such a perfect

friendship never ripened into love, for we were both young together and our lines crossed and met at every turn, but I suppose the understanding was too complete to admit of the striking of a more vital spark and we escaped the disillusionment of matrimony.

There are times I feel as old as Methuselah, and not often, but now and then the world is a bit drab. This occurs usually when I have come in contact with some petty meanness at the Home, for we are a small world out there with its different elements of human failings, and there are experiences that rather emphasize the spiritual ills we are heir to. It takes an unlimited amount of patience to guide my people through the labyrinth of daily possibilities of friction, to make them see comedy and avert tragedy, for every incident is magnified in importance because of the tranquillity in which they live. The chances of discord or eruption are minimized by the policy of permitting a liberal exercise of individual rights, and after making allowances for the human-hog tendency that creeps into every place, we have comparatively little trouble that is more than merely irritating.

The McCurdy matter came to an issue a few days ago, when an attorney representing Mr. McCurdy came before our Board of Directors

pleading for the return of half of their gift for his client. He addressed the Board, but he singled me out as the one opposing him, for his manner and remarks were pointedly in my direction. I surmised he had been prevailed upon to take up this matter on the supposition that I had unduly influenced the McCurdys into making the deeds to the Home, and that he looked upon me unfavorably as a grafter of no little ability and no scruples. I asked him if he came directly from Mr. McCurdy or from Mrs. Childs. He resented the question and replied haughtily that he had been Mr. McCurdy's lawyer for years and had his confidence, and that Mr. McCurdy, realizing he had sacrificed a legal right to make a demand, threw himself on the generosity of the Board of Directors to return him half of the McCurdy estate, so that in a measure he could rectify the wrong he contemplated when he cut off his natural heirs without a dollar.

Knowing Mr. McCurdy's sentiments regarding these heirs and also recognizing the tactics of Mrs. Childs and Mrs. Philips in this movement, I doubted the statement, but wondered what had been done and how, to convince a man of the apparent intelligence and honesty of this young attorney who believed he was acting according to

the best interests and wishes of his old friend. No one besides Judge Goodridge knew of my exciting experience some weeks ago, and even he had no conception of the actual sinister influence at work. The statement as made by the attorney was accepted on its face value, and as it is not the intention of the directors to benefit the Home by inflicting an injury, the motion to allow the claim was carried above my protest. I wanted time to investigate thoroughly the claim presented. I felt sure there was a "nigger in the woodpile" and that Mr. McCurdy would never be allowed to dispose of his half of the McCurdy estate as set forth. However, I was a helpless minority and the Philips-Childs contingent scored their first victory.

Emily Reeves is the president of the Board of Directors and is evincing more interest in the Home than formerly, although she frankly admits her activity is not due to an unalloyed love for aged people. Her passion is young girls, they are her fad, the object of much of her unostentatious charity. She has them about her always and she reflects much of their youth and spontaneity. There is something very wholesome about Mrs. Reeves. I always feel better after a visit with her. Her money is not spoiling her as it does so many. She finds plenty to do on original, practical lines

and falls easily and naturally into the role of a great lady. She dresses in good taste and has become a really handsome woman. Her hair has turned prematurely gray, which softens her face, but does not age it, and her unaffected honesty is refreshingly attractive. I told her after the meeting, of some of my trouble over the McCurdy donation, but she consoled me by saying it wasn't worth worrying over, that the Home would succeed without it.

I hope it will, Jerry. This is the first backset it has had, and a loss of fifty thousand dollars is no small matter, and if I felt sure it would get into proper hands I would not mind its loss to the Home, but I am confident it will pass into the pockets of Mrs. Philips who has coveted it for years.

I should like a vacation and am seriously thinking of a trip to Honolulu. Tom could look after things awhile, there is nothing urgent requiring my presence, and I need to get away. Don't be surprised to get my next letter from the island of the bird of paradise.

Yours,
EDITH.

LETTER XVI

On Board "Matsonia."

DEAR JERRY:

IT IS difficult to realize I am really under way and headed for Honolulu. So long a time has elapsed since my last journey for pleasure, and so much has intervened that has changed the current of my life, I can hardly identify myself with the light-hearted traveler of my youthful days. It took considerable persuasion to prevent my backing down after I announced my desire to take a needed vacation, for I felt the anxiety of a mother over her brood of children and dreaded leaving my old people to the mercy of employees. I know it is absurd, for the matron has been true and tried, and our physician is within easy call, besides some day the Home will have to go on without me, for please God it outlives me for centuries, and it is almost strong enough now to be independent of me.

Before leaving I had an old-time cyclonic session with dressmakers and fairly reveled in the accumulation of becoming gowns. I had almost forgotten how to dress, but it is a knowledge that

can be soon resurrected, and I have trunks full of smart things that are going to help me enjoy my trip, for you know, Jerry, when a woman knows she is well-gowned she has a solid foundation for the pleasure she is bent on, and I mean to enjoy every hour of my six weeks' trip and return home to my work with a freshened mind and rested body.

Dorothy is with me. She is attracting considerable attention already. Her widow's weeds and beautiful young face make her very conspicuous. I do not believe she is grieving very deeply. Horace Gray was not a lovable man. There was so little in common between the middle-aged invalid and the sparkling young girl just out of the schoolroom! There is a vein of calculation in Dorothy that has developed her judgment, and when she marries again, as of course she will, the man will have to measure up to a certain standard she has set, unless the unexpected thing happens and she is carried away by a grand passion that will sweep all other considerations aside. There is very little resemblance to her brother Gordon in Dorothy. She has not his imagination and quick temper, nor his intemperance. There is no danger of the family skeleton affecting her. She inherits her father's placid, lucid temperament and his charm of man-

ner. I am quite fond of her and I was glad she was willing to be my guest on this trip for I did not care to travel by myself, yet I felt immeasurably alone and desolate as I watched the partings on the pier, between the arriving passengers and their friends, and sighed, for there was no one in all that multitude to wish me bon voyage or God-speed. All about me was life and bustle; an air of joyful expectancy was manifest which the tearful adieus of parting friends could not efface. The Hawaiian orchestra played "Aloha", on the upper deck, and as the melody mingled plaintively with the general confusion, our ship, with a tremendous quiver, slipped from her bondage into the cradle of the sea. I remained on deck watching the shores of San Francisco until they faded from view, and in those moments, as the burden of my daily cares rolled from me, I lived my life over again. Month after month, year after year, in cinematographic sequence the main events came before me—my happy girlhood, my heedless, reckless marriage, the few years of fool's paradise, then the bomb from a clear sky; the shock of the awakening, the readjustment, the years of humiliation, disappointment and despair, the agonizing deliverance; and at last, when like a shipwrecked mariner, I found myself in a strange place alone and for-

gotten, and where I least expected to find it, I found my work and blessed peace.

I'm going away from it now, but not for long. Never again will I be bereft, for on the Bay in Southern California in beautiful View Dale is my Home for the Aged, the child of my heart and brain, whose loving tendrils reach me through space and follow me everywhere, and which will draw me back from the ends of the earth as the magnet does the needle. Too much of myself has gone into the work ever to divorce my interest, although it is too big a thing to be circumscribed by my individuality. It would be lacking, indeed, if it were no greater than any of the units that make it what it is as a whole, but it represents an element in my life that has taken the place of a religion, chastening and softening my attitude to all mankind, and giving me the solace of a renewed faith in myself and my fellow beings.

It was one of the happiest days of my life when father surprised me by his long-looked-for visit and told me he had just come from the Home, and that he found it wonderful, even more so than you had led him to believe from your description of it. Dear Jerry, he was too full of paternal pride to remember he had ever disapproved of me, and in the few days of his stay he never failed to accom-

pany me on my daily visits to the Home. When he left to return home to mother it was with the intention to come back to California to live, and I little thought I would never see him again. It is more than a year since his death, and I have never before thanked you for urging him to come to me, yet it was like you to find the way to bring us together and to leave me the memory of his joy in my work to console me. Poor old father—he never deceived me a moment. I always knew that beneath his bluster I held a warm spot in his heart. I shall try to persuade mother to come West; just yet she feels she cannot leave the old place; it has too many tender associations, but both Tom and myself feel confident she will be willing to leave her old friends and home town and end her days with us in God's country.

I am writing this from my deck chair. I have been on deck since we steamed out of the harbor. I am not yet *en rapport* with my surroundings or particularly interested in my fellow travelers, but am in the mood in which I usually write to you. My heart was too full of the past, conjured up by the change of scene and action which is reminiscent of other journeys taken long ago under such different circumstances, to allow more than a passing interest in my surroundings.

The gentle, cradling motion of the ship is soothing to my tired nerves. I can close my eyes and imagine that I am being rocked on the bosom of my mother and that the soft strains of Hawaiian music are her lullaby, singing me to sleep. I am getting drowsy. I have six days in which to finish this—I shall not try to keep awake any longer. The rocking and the lullaby have done their work. I sleep—

JERRY, DEAR:

I certainly expected to go right on writing and by this time to have a heavy budget to send you, but I suppose it is the environment, the feel of new clothes and the general atmosphere of irresponsibility and holiday making that are responsible for my lack of concentration; at any rate, these last three days I've been metamorphosed into another being, and I find I have two distinct personalities and the one now in possession of my flesh refuses to be serious or middle-aged, in fact I've turned back and am young again. My rejuvenation began with the donning of my first dinner gown.

It has been so long since I have had occasion to be fully and formally dressed for an evening function that the process and result rather excited me,

and when Dorothy exclaimed, "Why, Edith, I never dreamed you were a beauty," I was vain enough to enjoy the flattery and half believed I deserved it. At any rate my spirits were keyed to a high pitch, and the fact that Dot and I were the only women at the table for six assigned us, added to my satisfaction.

Our table mates proved to be one of the officers of the ship, a civil engineer, an ex-governor and a newspaper reporter. The gentlemen exchanged cards. The officer introduced himself to me as he sat on my left, when, after a slight service he rendered, I spoke to him, and as the others were only waiting for an opportunity to be friendly I reverted to the time in which you knew me, when I did before the sun and moon that which seemed good unto me to do, and with a sublime indifference to comment, included them all in a general conversation in which they were not loath to enter. It was the beginning of full hours of unalloyed pleasure, for through our table companions we met many of the passengers and now have a coterie around us always.

Dorothy is very attractive and has any number of followers. I am looked upon as a widow, perhaps because I never speak of my husband, for I certainly have not imposed on any one, still I

do not mean to encourage unpleasant questions. This is my holiday and I look upon those I meet here as the necessary factors for an enjoyable time. We will not meet again; it is a passing episode, but for the time being very pleasant indeed. I keep wishing you were here on the steamer with us; it is the one thing lacking to make the trip perfect in every detail. The sea is calm as the Bay at home, and the weather delightful. We can play on deck all day and dance at night. We are entertained by the antics of a company of movies, who are acting scenes in every part of the vessel at all hours. They earn their money, poor dears. I don't envy them in the least.

I have not forgotten the Home. I think of it the last thing at night when I nestle in my berth happily tired out from dancing, talking and laughing. I almost forgot how to be happy for so many uninterrupted hours, but I'm afraid my prayers are largely like this, "Now I lay me down to sleep, God bless my dear old people. Amen," for I never remember a continuity in my reflections when I wake up to the sound of the bugle next morning.—Time to dress for dinner. I shall wear a pink rose slip under embroidered chiffon, and I hope I will look as well as I feel—more later.

The ex-governor is our shadow. He is a digni-

fied man of about fifty years of age. He is a widower and has senatorial aspirations. He also has coal mines and bank stocks—in fact he is taking pains to impress me with his desirability, so that I more than half suspect he has designs on Dorothy, yet he is not a bore. I find him quite interesting as a type, for in spite of his political success he is an infant in his knowledge of women. He had but a short married life, which may account for his lack of education in matters feminine, and as he is now relaxing after strenuous public duty he is in a very susceptible state and can be easily caught. Dot says I'm wrong in my diagnosis and that the fact of his remaining a widower for fifteen years proves him not easily vulnerable, and constant to an ideal. She also negatives my notion of her attraction for him.

We had a very exciting experience this morning. A sailor fell overboard and while the alarm was given, and before the ship's progress was arrested, the passengers saw the form of the sailor valiantly swimming toward the vessel; so close was he we caught the smile on his face. Suddenly his expression changed and a cry of horror went up from the watchers as an anguished wail reached us, and the victim disappeared. There was a momentary lashing of waves, dark, rounded forms

appeared for a moment where the sailor had been, and then—only the wide expanse of the Pacific. Someone said, "Sharks," and amidst the crunching and grinding of machinery the ship was halted in its course. Boats were lowered, and for two hours the distance was scoured. It was only a matter of form—the fate of the sailor was known when his cry reached us.

The luncheon was served, but few ate. Afterwards the bugle called all to the salon where services for the dead were read by the ship's chaplain, and the beautiful ceremony of casting flowers on the waters was performed. Someone started a collection. It had been learned a lonely old mother would grieve for her boy, and after a hymn the passengers scattered and the incident was closed. The dinner was as brilliant as those of preceding nights, and with common consent the day's tragedy was not referred to.

Tomorrow is our sixth and last day aboard. I am almost sorry the half of our journey has been covered. I feel I could go on indefinitely in this environment, but of course it is because I have been so long out of this kind of life that I'm still hypnotized in believing everything pertaining to it is real, and the pleasure lasting. I'll wake up no doubt before long and Cinderella-like creep

back to my rags of actuality, having had my one stolen hour in youth's domain, and being just that much richer in memories. I shall mail this on our landing at Honolulu and write you another syncopated edition from there.

Yours on the briny deep,

EDITH.

LETTER XVII

Honolulu.

MINE FRIEND:

I SHALL never forget the beauty of my first glimpse of Honolulu. It was early morning, a pale purple haze enveloped the island, and as through a transparent veil the picture spread before me in all its indescribable beauty. The deep blue of the water dotted by the small crafts of every description was shadowed by the verdure-covered mountains. Palms and other tropical trees edged the islands like the soft strokes of a painter's brush. As we drew nearer, the rising sun's pink glow was reflected in high lights on the sails of the sampans and changed the purple glow to deep rose. The air was balmy, the sea like glass. Early as it was, a large crowd had gathered on the pier, natives laden with flower-petaled leis, men and women in white linen, Japs and Chinese, Hindoos, negroes, Mexicans and our soldiers in khaki. A band played some plaintive, soft melodies on guitars and ukuleles, as only Hawaiians know how to play, and so we landed, and nowhere else is a stranger welcomed with the

same shy, friendly smile of greeting that the Hawaiians accorded us.

It is a different world I am transported to, oriental in tone, cosmopolitan in spirit, and, yet, after spending a few days here I feel the unwarranted intrusion of the aliens, and resent the so-called civilization that has changed this idyllic paradise of the natives into a thriving, bustling tourist's mecca. The missionaries have much to answer for. They not only robbed the Hawaiians of their land and native freedom, but of the bliss of ignorant contentment in their music, their laughter and their loves. Nature lavishly provided their needs; the sea for their bath, flowers and fruit everywhere; they had joy in their hearts, and songs always on their lips. The gods had given them of their best, and nothing we can offer can compensate them for their lost Eden. I may be sentimentally foolish to feel as I do, but I shall always remember my visit here with a tinge of regret and remember Honolulu, not as it is today, but for what it has been.

Our ex-governor is at the Monoa with us. In fact he is too much in evidence to suit my purpose; his unselfish kindness to Dorothy and me will not allow of snubbing him, and our new circle of fellow travelers includes him naturally in every

expedition and pairs us off with aggravating regularity. It sounds horribly conceited, but I'm afraid I will have to tell him I am a married woman, and much as I dislike to on Dorothy's account, tell him of Gordon.

We are very gay here; music and dancing every evening after the daily drives, sails and bathing. I like best to watch the surf riders; their bronzed bodies poised like birds, riding the billows with the ease of zephyrs. I should like to imitate them but I know I should be drowned in the effort.

Tom cabled all was well at the Home, which relieved my mind, and gives me zest for further enjoyment. I have not heard from you for some time, but expect at least one letter from you before I return.

Tomorrow we visit the crater. I won't describe it, for you have read of it too often to waste time in a repetition, and my letters are not to be fashioned after a tourist's guide. I want to talk to you and span the distance that separates us, and hope my letters will carry my thoughts to you as I send them. We seem destined never to meet again, Jerry, and yet you are always very near to me; even in this Isle of Paradise, amidst the strange scenes and stranger people, I feel your presence and hear your voice.

Ours is a strange friendship, giving much that is essential to complete mutual happiness, yet never crossing the dividing line to a different love. I often wonder at it and believe it is rare indeed. It is the one blessing the Fates have decreed should abide and I believe the loss of it would mean more to me than all the other sorrows and disappointments of my varied strenuous life; that and the possible failure of the Home of Peace. You represent the human element and the Home, the material interest of my composite existence. The loss of either would leave me stranded.

There are not many old people here, but the few I saw made me homesick for my friends at the Home. I know they miss me, and because I have the well wishes and love of so many to follow me, it is not strange that every hour here is fraught with delight. I am thoroughly and determinedly selfish in my abandonment. I want to have a real rest and then go back to my unfinished work with renewed vigor and fresher ideas.

It is late, dear, and we sail early to see the volcano, so good-night, pleasant dreams and, Jerry, boy, let them be some times of

YOUR EDITH.

LETTER XVIII

JERRY, DEAR:

WE HAVE been back to Honolulu for some days. I cannot say I enjoyed the trip to the crater as much as I expected. There was little or no eruption; the volcano seemed very sinister in its subdued sulphurous excretions. The desolation of lava-covered area was impressive but not beautiful. I was glad to return to the hotel and positively relieved to get back on the steamer; and Honolulu looked mighty good to me when we arrived.

There was a ship leaving for the States the same evening. The Governor left on it. It was best so, although I am sorry I spoiled his vacation. Jerry, you will believe me when I say I never dreamed he was seriously attracted to me, and that as soon as I had the opportunity I told him of Gordon. I despise a thoughtless flirt and I feel very deeply the fact that he misconstrued my exuberance and believed me free from all marital responsibilities. He will soon forget me, or if he remembers at all it will be only as an unpleasant incident in his visit to Honolulu.

Dorothy said she saw the climax coming long before I even suspected the truth and was enjoying the situation immensely. I felt very angry at her, for if that were true, she could have saved us both the necessity of an embarrassing explanation, for I feel as if I had been sailing under false colors, and yet I simply could not tell mere traveling acquaintances of my unhappiness, and I never thought of the possibility of being made love to. In a measure it has spoiled my vacation and I shall not be quite so happy and gay as I have been and shall spend the balance of my time here very quietly, really resting.

I shall delve into the lyric history of the Hawaiians. It fascinates me; it will give me something to tell my people at the Home, for of course they will want to hear all about my trip, and I want to picture Honolulu to them as I see it; to visualize the Japanese girl-mothers in kimonos, carrying their babes on their backs, and the Hawaiians in their Mother-Hubbard dresses (they are always shorter in front) selling their leis and wreaths on street corners without an envious thought for their more favored half-white sisters who ride by them in their autos or carriages, the wives or daughters of American army officers. I'll have much to tell them on my return, which won't

be long now, for I feel the call of my work and I must not tarry much longer.

I shall not write you again until my return home. Dorothy has agreed to come home with me. I am anxious to have Tom meet her. He has only a vague recollection of her years ago when Gordon and I were married. She was a thin, freckled and awkward child then; he will be amazed at the change and I believe he will enjoy having her with us—I hear the whistle of the steamer. I will close this so as to send it on board by the Jap who is patiently waiting for me to finish, so au revoir. When I write again it will be from California.

Hastily,
EDITH.

LETTER XIX

My dear Jerry:

YES, it has been a long time since my last letter to you, and a great many things have transpired since my visit to Honolulu, which, if chronicled in regular bulletins, would have filled many letters. But you deserved some punishment for taking the only time I was away to visit my adopted city and the Home of Peace.

None of the many nice things you have said of my work, my Home, or of Southern California can make up to me for not seeing you. If you even had hinted of the possibility of your coming, you know I should have remained at home on just a bare chance of seeing you. I could not believe my ears when Tom told me you had been a guest at our bungalow ten long days, and I miles away. It certainly seemed premeditated and yet, for the life of me, I cannot see why you should want to avoid me; of course it was a coincidence, but it made me very miserable.

Tom told me of your keen interest in my old people; of your auto trips to Pine Hills, Campo and Alpine, and of your enjoyment of the magnificent

views; and while I was glad you now knew my beautiful mountains, I wanted to have been in Tom's place when you saw them. You say in one of your letters everything seemed familiar from my descriptions and that my house breathed of me. Houses are like that, Jerry, the personality of the occupants is impressed on every inanimate object, and the atmosphere fairly reverberates with their presence.

I like to think you have been here, since the keen edge of my disappointment has worn off, that you have sat in the chair I call yours, that you have spent days at the Home of Peace and now know all my people. They were glad to have me back. I received a royal welcome. Every pillar and post was decorated. The dining-room was ablaze with gorgeous flowers. They were at dinner when I arrived, and such shouting and cheering you never heard. I kissed every one of them and confess, cried a little in my joy to be with them again. Oh, it was good to be back! The Home never looked better nor the members more happy.

It is good work, Jerry, I am proud of it and prouder still of the dear old people who have helped to make it the wonderful place it is. I know there is no other Home like it, with its freedom from restraint, and the wide-awake

mutual interest that is so much in evidence.

How I wish Henry Lessing were alive to see it. It is developing just as we planned it should, and now that we are to have our hospital without waiting until Mr. McCurdy's death, there remains only the assembly hall and the chapel to wish for, and an endowment.

I don't suppose you have forgotten the trouble I had over the McCurdy gift. Well, the sequel was this. Mrs. Childs married her brother-in-law and somehow induced him to deed over the one-half interest in the McCurdy estate, which the Board of Directors returned to him on request of his young lawyer friend. The next move of the conspirators was to enter into negotiations with our trustees for the purchase of the other half, which was finally arranged on condition that the purchase price would be immediately available for the building of the hospital. So you see, Jerry, the Childs-Philips contingent won after all. They now have possession of the entire estate at the cost of less than a third of its value.

From a business standpoint we did not do well, but under the circumstances it was best to take a half loaf and eliminate unpleasant possibilities in a strife with people of their calibre. So now the hospital is under way.

I am superintending its erection and, believe me, it will be spacious, airy and have sunshine in every room. I spend hours every night in the study of hospital management, or more correctly speaking, in the study of the needs of the sick. I have a full complement of books on nursing, including a "Materia Medica," so that by the time the hospital is ready for business I shall have some practical knowledge in every branch of that work, and be prepared for an intelligent supervision of the hospital's requirements.

My days are so full there are not hours enough in them for all I want to do. I have no time for thinking of my personal worries, nor have I given much time to Dorothy. I turned her over to Tom to amuse, and I begin to have a suspicion that neither misses me or minds my absorption.

Tom is like another being, his interests are awakened and his ambitions fired. He has bought several ranches and is taking up farming as a profession, seriously. I am selfishly satisfied his ambition has not led him to adopt some other vocation, for he can still look after the farm at the Home, which is a big responsibility in itself and a large factor in the production of our supplies. We have the finest vegetables the year around, and fruit in season and get our milk from our own

dairy. It is one of the many features that makes the Home so desirable.

As for Dorothy, she is lovelier than ever; if it isn't Tom who is responsible for her blooming I don't know who is, for after all we lead rather quiet lives socially. Dot refused to be formally entertained, and fell easily into the habits of our household. Tom and she motor all over the country and she is taking a keen interest in agriculture. I would feel out of it were I not too busy to mind. Yet I miss Tom's undivided interest and realize what it will mean if he decides to marry and settle down in a home of his own.

I am glad you went to see Gordon while you were here. Of course he did not know you. He doesn't know me, and as he is being well cared for I do not often visit him. It is a task that grows more irksome with each year. I cannot blame myself, however, nor alter the unfortunate conditions.

Jerry, don't wait for me to write you; understand I am with you in spirit even if others claim every moment of my time. I need your letters, every one of them; they are the bright spots in my life, for no one else seems to care as much what I do and how I fare, and one never grows too old to be indifferent to solicitation. I played a few weeks while in Honolulu, and now that my holiday

is over I am back to my job and working hard, but not any harder than I want to. I am far too restless to desire leisure. If I were not kept busily employed I might get into mischief, or worse, imagine myself miserable. Either would cause you to worry, but not enough to bring you here. If there were a chance, I would plan some wild and woolly escapade, or threaten suicide—There! I promised myself never again to intimate how much I wanted to see you—but it is no use; I do want to see you more than you can possibly realize. Friendship, like love, has claims and you have been sadly delinquent, and Jerry, my dear friend, I have been a very patient creditor.

Yours as always,

EDITH.

LETTER XX

My dear Jerry:

THIS is my first opportunity to write you at length. I could not possibly find time before to write more than a few lines in acknowledgment of your dear, chatty letters, that meant so much to me in the chaos of building, furnishing and launching our hospital. It is furnished at last, and is a beauty. Every room opens to the sunlight, wide verandas everywhere, from each window a beautiful view of our park with the scent of orange blossoms wafted through. I will enclose a folder that will tell you of the operating room, the hydro-therapy department and the fine equipment that rates it first class in every particular.

It has been planned to do public service as well as care for our own sick, and I hope the revenue earned will be sufficient not only to support the hospital but to add to our sinking fund, for it is a great responsibility, and unless the physicians support it, it will be an added financial burden that the Home can ill afford, but I'm not borrowing trouble. The benefit to our old people of this added accessory to the Home's equipment cannot

be estimated alone in dollars and cents. I do not know of another institution of this kind that has a fully equipped and regular up-to-the-minute hospital at its command, and old Mr. McCurdy was justified in the pride he expressed in it the day of its dedication.

We made a great event of this occasion. The Home was *en fete*, and hundreds came to the exercises and inspected the hospital. Mr. McCurdy formally presented the building to the Home, and in a quavering voice made quite a speech. He paid me a high tribute and incidentally said he hoped the balance of his wealth would be used in behalf of our Home. Poor dear, he does not realize his present wife and her friend have made that impossible. However, he has done a fine thing with part of his money. He has made it possible to administer to and ease suffering creatures, and the McCurdy Hospital will stand a monument to his memory long after all parties connected with it have passed away.

I have news for you—Tom and Dorothy are engaged. They are to be married in the Fall. Both are very happy. Tom is building a bungalow at View Dale on one of his largest ranches. It is only a short distance from the Home, and he has promised not to desert me in looking after the Home

farm. Dot has returned to Chicago. She will be married from her father's home. I hope to go East to the wedding and have written mother to come West to live with me when I return.

Before Tom came I was perfectly content to live alone, but it will be unbearable now. I shall very probably run down to St. Louis then and will see you, if you do not take that time to run over to Africa or to some other distant clime. If you do, I shall know you are purposely avoiding me and you will never be able to give me a satisfactory explanation—in fact I should decide I had been deceiving myself and that our much-vaunted friendship was a myth of my own making, and that the long years since we have met had completely effaced me from your old-time affection and regard.

Jerry, I must have some more money at once. If you won't touch the principal, at least send me the accrued interest you spoke of investing. I need the money to help get the hospital started and am not needing more money for myself. Now don't grumble, dear friend. You never can change me; I am incorrigible when it comes to persuading me to pile up a fortune for myself. It was fortunate I allowed you to tie up my little all beyond my power to use any except the interest, without the

consent of the trustees, for I certainly should have little or nothing left, for there have been times without number when I wanted to do something for the Home that seemed important enough for any sacrifice I might make. However, all I have will some day go to the Home. Probably I shall want some building erected in my memory, for there is not even a cornerstone that marks the work with my name, and I should like not to be soon forgotten.

You see I am quite alone, the Home is the nearest active interest in my life. It has become the best part of me; it has my first waking thought each morning and my last at night. I work hard, but indeed I do not deserve commiseration, for I love my work and my old people; they fill my life to overflowing, and their love and contentment are full compensation.

Yours faithfully,

EDITH.

LETTER XXI

My dear Jerry:

I AM intensely interested in every phase of hospital work. What a field there is in nursing as a vocation for women of the right sort! But I regret that too many see only the possible remuneration and not the divine privilege of administering to the suffering, and lack that tender touch of sympathetic understanding that is more than half of the essence of a nurse's profession. With the schooling and the training that is now required they have become a very important factor to the surgeons and physicians in their work, and I am afraid that there is not enough of the nurse, but more of the physician's assistant in the too technically trained graduate, and their duty toward the patient is on too prescribed lines. The adjusting of this super-knowledge with the homely services the sick require, depends entirely upon the nurse's ability to forget herself in the interest of her patient. I have seen nurses who could diagnose a patient's symptoms accurately, upon whose knowledge the physicians depended absolutely, satisfied that the report to him over the telephone

was as dependable as his own observation, yet who thought that the cleanliness and neatness of the sick room were not in their province, but the work of an orderly, who believed the preparation of their patient's diet was beneath their dignity and calling. I cannot admire this class. They are detrimental to the profession, and if the physicians realized it, a real menace to their own success, for the importance with which they invest themselves overshadows the skill of the physician, and being constantly with the case, impresses accordingly. I do not mean to disparage knowledge, one can never know too much, but I should like to see more emphasis put on that branch of their education which will graduate the student with a truer insight into the actual requirements of a sick room and to take her cases in the same spirit as a mother ministering to her child. Nothing is more appealing than the sick and suffering. It should call out in every woman the best there is in her. The maternal instinct, largely developed, makes the best nurse, regardless of the knowledge she may possess of anatomy or materia medica.

So, too, the true physician is born, not made, and the same rule regarding fitness applies to him as it does to the nurse. No physician can become really great if he cannot combine with necessary

skill a real love for his fellow man and a deep sympathy for suffering.

I am sorry to confess, Jerry, my familiarity with doctors has lost me the old-time respect I held for the profession. I know now that the possession of a diploma and an M.D. is not a guarantee for skill or natural adaptability, and that the old-time doctor who sacrificed his time and himself for his patients is obsolete. The modern doctor may be more scientific, and his learning more profound, theoretically, but only a small minority follow their calling for the love of it, and science and pretentiousness fail to take the place of the deep love and abiding faith in the hearts and minds of their patients, which was part of the old-fashioned doctor's pay. This sounds disparaging and censorious and is unjust to a few of the men I have met, for there is always the exception to the rule, but as it is a consensus of the results of my observation it will have to stand, and I am truly sorry I cannot believe I am wrong in my estimation of the modern, up-to-the-minute physician of today.

With the hospital in full swing, having our quota of business, I have little time for recreation and it is surprising how little I seem to miss it. The Board of Directors urges me to take another vacation, but I prefer to remain at work. It is all so full of inter-

est and you can imagine how glad I am that now, when my old people are ill, I can see them tucked comfortably in a white bed, with a nurse, the kind I approve of, at hand to do for them, and a doctor always within call. At first it was difficult to have them look upon their transfer kindly—they preferred their familiar rooms—but after one experience, they agreed with me they could receive better care than could be rendered at the Home.

Jerry, I have not told you of late of our Board of Directors, and they certainly deserve a big share of the success of the Home, and a special place in my letters. They have been such a help to me, encouraging, praising and lending their services at every opportune time. My early estimate of their characters was not far wrong. With the exception of Mr. Colburn, all have remained on the Board and have been staunch to the promise made to Mr. Lessing to see the thing through, and gradually, as they realized my earnestness and the progress and aim of the Home, they have given me their allegiance, and their services have been in accord. Judge Goodridge steers all the legal transactions safely from the shoals of litigation, and Mr. Scott's shrewd judgment in business matters has added to the Home's reputation for solvency. Mr. Colburn fulfilled my prophecy by resigning

shortly after Mr. Lessing's death. His place was not filled for some time and then by Dr. Steel, but I'm sorry to tell you I feel he, as a director, is a mistake. He was elected on my recommendation, because it was thought that a physician on the Board would be an added benefit since we had the hospital to look after, but it is a notorious fact that doctors as a rule are lacking in business instinct, and outside of their profession are as impractical as children, and he is not an exception to this rule. As he is not interested in the Home he has proved a disappointment to me, and his membership on the Board will not extend over a longer period than it will take to find just the man we need, and there is no doubt but he will be glad to resign.

It has been a great advantage to me in having only a small Board of Directors to contend with, and I should advise that the number of trustees of any like institution should never exceed seven; and as for an advisory committee or sub-managing board, may the angels defend, for they are the hot-house of trouble and are the stumbling blocks to success. I tried it a short while, but soon eliminated them when I found that the majority of the women appointed had not one opinion in common, and that their chief office was to find fault and

gossip. There were among the number a few sensible women who appreciated the situation and seconded heartily my move to disband them. These women have unofficially stood by me and have done a world of work from no other incentive than their knowledge of what the Home stood for, and a belief in my purpose.

This is rather a dictatorial letter and dry reading, but you asked me so many questions and writing thus at length explains the situation and answers you fully, also serving the purpose of keeping you in closer touch with my work. My letters are largely a detailed history of the evolution of an ambitious idea into a large and growing institution, whose tenets have revolutionized the conception of age and its requirements and placed the sunset years largely on life's calendar. I am hoping the Home of Peace will be an object lesson, helping, by its example, in the recognition of age in its true value.

Why, Jerry, the Chinese can teach us a lesson on this subject. In their land of poppy and rice, old men and women are not objects of commiseration, but hold their heads high in the acknowledged power and wisdom experience gives. You know we, as a nation, are wastrels; we spend too freely of every largess in our power, and find our-

selves suddenly on a brink with opportunities for conservation behind us, and when we count the spendthrift years, stand aghast and believe life has nothing more to offer. This is the tragic epoch of age, and is the real test of character; it is a bitter gruelling, but no well-spent life but has something then to weigh in the balance, and when stock is taken and assets accurately appraised and no delusions remain, all things true stand revealed, and with the truer vision life has still many gifts to offer and age its compensation. I believe it would be of more profit to be taught to prepare for seventy and over, than to prepare for death, for the last great experience is unavoidable, but we can fashion our lives as we will and be all the more prepared to meet our Maker when we are satisfied with the account we can render of ourselves.

I have not heard from Tom or Dorothy but once since their marriage. They will soon return, the war in Europe having cut short their honeymoon. I was sorry I could not go East and see them married but Gordon's attack of pneumonia threatened to terminate seriously and my first duty was to him, of course. Since his recovery the doctors report an improvement in his mental condition, and I believe he almost remembers me, still it is too much to hope for his complete recovery, although

stranger things have happened. As for myself I'm often tired, but perfectly well and still wanting to see you, but fear we will never meet again, and that our letters are the only link that binds us to the long ago.

Yours,
EDITH.

LETTER XXII

My dear Jerry:

WHAT an awful year it has been! Can there be anything more calamitous than this war? It seems incredible that a civilization of centuries' making could, in so short a time, be almost wiped out. Is it not incomprehensible that any nation or nations could be drawn into strife that sweeps every vestige of reason and sense of right or wrong before it! Can the warring nations ever reconcile this sacrifice of life and property with anything any of them may gain? How can men believe they alone can upbuild and lead nations when their primitive instincts are so near the surface and a lust to kill and destroy so easily aroused. There may be a hidden purpose in this eruption, some move in the Great Scheme that will justify this carnage, for surely all things lead to the great finale, but it is beyond my comprehension, and nothing can explain away the dreadful evidence that man, as a specie, is but little removed from the brute.

I hope aspiring suffragettes will use the war and its results as a striking example of what men will

do from a despotic standpoint, which justifies any means to an end. I hope you will take this to heart, Jerry, for you are certainly behind the times in opposing equal suffrage, and yet if you read the handwriting on the wall it is inevitable as prohibition. The political pie will not be more delectable for having women's fingers in it, but there at least will be enough of it to go around.

The Home is not apparently affected by the war. In this haven of peace the sheltered quiet is a striking contrast to the turmoil and horror of war-ridden Europe. They all grieve over the futility and cost of the struggle, and in the wisdom of their years counsel peace on earth, good will to all fellow men.

I have taken care that the high price of food and other commodities for their comfort has not disturbed them as it has me. The strain has been tremendous on our financial resources and has given me many a wakeful night. Jerry, I realize that all these people who have gathered under the protecting roof of the Home of Peace have no other warrant for the continuance of their peace of mind but my own energetic resolve to keep things afloat, and if I fail them they will be bereft indeed. Why, I can not afford even the luxury of a sick spell, and if I were to die, my house would not be in order and my duty to my old people undone. I had hoped

that the hospital would net us handsome returns, but it merely fills its mission in caring for our sick. The high prices of drugs and other hospital necessities consume any profit that might accrue from the amount of outside service we are rendering.

I have fretted over conditions until I am almost ill, and last night I dreamed vividly of Mr. Lessing. I seemed in the dream to appeal to him for help in an effort I was making to bring a barge ashore through stormy waters, and that he waved his hands toward a rainbow and bade me go there to find my pot of gold, and as I turned to do his bidding the waters became calm and I awoke just before I reached my goal. I am not usually superstitious, Jerry, but it has been a repeated experience when I needed help most I dreamed of Mr. Lessing, and later, following an inspiration, found the means of solving my problem. So I shall follow the thought which persists in my mind and ask his children to finish their father's work by an endowment that will perpetuate it, for I feel my limitations have been reached and until I have secured the Home from any possible disaster that might wreck it I cannot go on in peace. I owe it to our old people and I owe it to Mr. Lessing. I have not failed him as yet and my promise to him to see the proposition through must be redeemed.

I should have preferred to have earned a sufficient reserve for I am not good in asking favors, and it will cost me considerable pride to ask for help. However, the Lessing family are fair-minded and appreciative of what has been accomplished, and an amount necessary to safely endow the Home will not be a serious drain on their large resources, and I believe they will want to foster a work in which their father had so much heart interest.

Mrs. Reeves takes a kindly, if cursory, interest in the Home, and tells me I am foolish to worry, and I know she will do all she can toward interesting her family in an endowment, but she has so many invasions on her time and money that I hesitate to intrude the Home's needs on her too persistently. A rich woman has a hard time of it as it is; every one singles her out as a victim to their wiles, and cannot understand or forgive her lack of interest in the hundreds of worthy enterprises for which they are soliciting aid. It certainly is easier to spend other people's money than one's own, and the rich have no easy time of it in maintaining their right to dispose of their surplus as they see fit and yet meet with public approval.

I wrote Mrs. Long a heart to heart letter, telling her of the need of an endowment, and why I had failed to accumulate sufficient capital to perpetu-

ate the work that has been done. She will understand; she is very like her father in many respects, and has his understanding of the needs of old people and realizes I have endeavored to embody in the life of the Home some of his wonderful personality; it is fashioned on the same broad lines that characterized his own work, and there is nothing tepid or vapid in its atmosphere. Its foundation is deeply and strongly imbedded in the soil of his giving and will stand a monument to a man who did all things well. She will help me finish the work as he would have finished it himself. I believe he would be pleased with what I have done, and the thought gratifies me. I have given eight years of hard work to the up-building of the Home of Peace, it has been a work of love and I hope to give as many more, and when the nerve-wearing anxiety of ways and means is eliminated I can accomplish much more, for there are many things still to be done. Gradually different additions to the Home have been made. The gift of another five-acre tract adjoining the Home grounds has opened vistas of possibilities, and I have a place selected on which some day to build a chapel and assembly hall.

I spend most of my time at the Home. Mother thinks it would be better to build a bungalow at

View Dale and live near the Home, but I can work better after twelve hours' intermission away from the field of my labors. I get a better perspective, there is not the danger of overlooking defects from too close a familiarity, and besides I owe mother a little of my undivided attention in an atmosphere that is not invaded by "shop" interest. I am happy to say she has become reconciled to California and has ceased to mourn her old friends, having made some new ones here, and finds real happiness in the fact that Tom and I are not far apart.

Dorothy has become a model rancher's wife. To hear her talk of silos, alfalfa and yearlings and in fact of everything pertaining to ranch life, one would hardly believe that less than two years ago she didn't know alfalfa from a cabbage patch, and wouldn't recognize a disc if she fell over it. Love is a wonderful thing, Jerry, when there is a mutual interest. Some of the happiest marriages I know of have been where both the man and wife labor together toward a definite goal.

Tom and Dot are of this fortunate set. They find untold happiness in every living and growing thing on their ranch, and their faces reflect their love for each other. I have a twinge of envy sometimes. I seem always to have just missed this kind of complete happiness, and in spite of my inde-

pendence have always wanted the petting that the clinging vine type of woman never wants for. I'm not forgetting your petting, Jerry, but it is years since I had it, and perhaps it is the memory of the golden hours when you and I were always together that makes my heart ache with loneliness, and I realize at times that, though my life is full of work, full of interest, I lack just one element of happiness—love—and only in such moments life seems a bit dreary—Jerry, boy, don't wait too long to find your happiness. I want you to find peace at your fireside, with children hovering about your knees and some good woman loving you as you deserve to be loved, always near by. As for me—I have my old people. They need me and in giving them all I have to give, I find consolation.

Yours, as always,

EDITH.

LETTER XXIII

JERRY, MIO:

IT IS done—we are to have our endowment, and a generous one it is to be. How good every one has been to me and to the Home! Every step of the way someone has always been ready with the helping hand, and every dark cloud has had its silver lining. It has been a long, hard road, but our hour of triumph has arrived; the Home will now always be.

I went out to the cemetery this morning and strewed flowers over the graves of the Lessings—my way of expressing my gratitude to their children for this noble act of theirs—and in the quiet of that garden of the dead I fancied the whispering pines and swaying palms brought me a message from Henry Lessing and that I heard his voice say, "Well done, now all is well," and as I slowly wended my way toward the city I felt he rested more peacefully, his unfinished work had been completed by his children.

It was on Henry Lessing, Jr., that the burden of arranging for the endowment fell, and he was characteristically blunt in expressing his opinion of the

responsibility I had created. He swept aside all sentiment and saw only an audacious act of an enthusiast that had created a "Frankenstein" which was threatening to crush her and bring havoc on all concerned. All that I had put into the work counted for naught when I had failed to provide the means to safeguard it always. His condemnation had considerable truth in it as far as facts went, I had builded largely on faith, and it takes money, not love of the work, to sustain institutions, and my heart ached because I could not provide both.

I don't believe he meant to be unkind, he simply did not know all the Home stood for, and because it was so great a factor to human happiness it had grown beyond its resources, and needed his money and other people's money as other big things need the support of those who have to give.

However, he did his part and some day he will be glad of his share in the Home of Peace. It may not be until his youth and strength have departed, but the time will come when he will realize that all great things are born of sentiment. If I have done wrong in all these years, Jerry, it was "that good might come," and I cannot find it in my heart to regret the years I have spent in behalf of the aged.

I have been ill; the anxiety of these last months

laid me low, and I began to fear that I would not be allowed to finish my work, but since the agony of anxiety has been removed and I know that nothing now will undo my work of years, I shall be able to continue with my old-time vigor and accomplish much that is needed.

I have the hearty co-operation of intelligent members in the Home, and since we have added two directors to the Board, and elected Mr. Reeves in Dr. Steel's place, we have an executive body that promises much for the Home's future management, for they are men who understand all the Home represents and are in deep sympathy with it and will help to sustain it on the lines on which it was founded. I am very happy over our good fortune and wish you were here to help me celebrate. I will take a holiday in the near future and perhaps surprise you with a visit. Will you be glad to see me, Jerry?

Happily yours,

EDITH.

LETTER XXIV

My dear Jerry:

INDEED I did not want to hurt you when I asked you not to come, as you offered to, when Gordon died. I can hardly explain my reasons even to myself, but I felt I could not bear to see you after so many years until I had grown accustomed to the new sense of freedom, and I had adjusted my life to the new order of things.

I had accustomed myself to believe there always would be Gordon, and was wholly unprepared for the change his death makes in my life. You ask me if I have plans. I have none as yet. I shall go on as before. The Home still needs me; I realized how much when the recent floods surrounded it with danger, and what my presence during the storm meant to my old people. No one else needs me really, and I am not more lonely than before. Now that the Home is endowed I can take a holiday, but at this writing I cannot tell when or where that holiday will be spent. It will have to be on American soil, as the war still rages. I shall probably leave the decision with mother, for of course she never would be satisfied to remain alone,

and any place will suit me. I need the change for I am very tired.

I wish you lived here, Jerry. St. Louis is so far away and writing so unsatisfactory. As usual I always want you very much when there has been an upheaval or a crisis in the order of my life, in spite of the fact that in these many years you never came to see me, and there were only our letters that served to keep me in touch with you and only my memory and imagination to picture you as you are.

Do you realize, Jerry, I have many gray hairs? I'm no longer a girl, but a woman who has lived and suffered. I wonder what the future has in store for me. I have run the gamut of every sorrow; surely the Furies will now pass me by.

Write to me often, Jerry, I need your letters.

EDITH.

LETTER XXV

JERRY—JERRY:

I DON'T know where to begin. I have read and read again the letter you call your confession, and am trembling still with the joy of it. I can hardly believe it possible that you have seen me time and again in the long years since we met, and I never sensed your presence. Your having watched over me is like you, but that you have loved me always and I am the one woman of your life, is too beautiful to grasp.

Poor dear, of course I hurt you often for I did not know, but please God I'll never hurt you again. Jerry, your letter lifted a veil and I see now rightly what has always been and what had to be. I am glad you are proud of me, and that the cruel years of separation have passed, and, having seen and known the change time has wrought, you still desire me. But, Jerry dear, you are wrong in one thing. Your Peter Pan has grown up, and life long ago ceased to be a play-day. It has been too real for illusions to abide, and your old-time playmate has learned real values, and not the least of these is an unselfish, and abiding love.

So, Jerry dear, come to me and in this glorious Golden West we will spend the years that will be ours, and hand in hand, in the fullness of our contentment, give unto others.

Joyously,

EDITH.

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